

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING GAMING, COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE

NAG

PC PLAYSTATION XBOX Wii

**Special June
Giblet Jamboree
edition of NAG!**

**GRAND
THEFT
AWESOME**

REVIEWED: GET
YOUR ROCKS OFF
IN LIBERTY CITY



INSIDE:

- Ghostbusters: The Game
- Huge horror feature with
Alone in the Dark,
Resident Evil 5 and more.

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vaporised by a steam of protons. Oh well.

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VOL 11 ISSUE 3 06.2008
SOUTH AFRICA R39.00



ONE MAN. ONE NIGHT. ONE APOCALYPTIC SECRET.

"From what we've seen, Alone is going to be one hell of a game."

PCJEUX

"intelligent gameplay, superb physics in action and, perhaps most impressive of all, the use of fire as a key feature."

joystick

"...Alone in the Dark stands to present human resourcefulness at a level never seen before in a videogame."

playmagn



centraldark.com

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(66210)

R1999⁹⁵



XBOX 360

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R399⁹⁵



XBOX 360

Wireless Network Adapter

► Designed for versatility and ease, seamlessly synchronising with the Xbox 360 system ► Transfer videos and music to your Xbox 360 system from your Media Center PC, chat with your friends, play games (61336) ► Selected Stores

R999⁹⁵

► Selected Stores: Bayside, Centurion, Eastgate, Gateway, Woodmead, Port Elizabeth & Nelspruit



R499⁹⁵

Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
(66212)



R699⁹⁵

Iron Man
(66213)



XBOX 360 R249⁹⁵

Wireless PC Windows Adapter

► Take quality, wireless gaming from console to Windows gaming platform (61337)



Assorted Xbox 360 Games

► Battlefield Bad Company (66211) ► Command and Conquer's Kane's Wrath (65398) ► Ninja Gaiden 2 (66150)

R599⁹⁵ EACH

Wii

Wii Sports Pack

► Bundled with the Wii console and a Wii Remote ► Backward-compatible to all Nintendo GameCube games ► Includes 4 ports for controllers & 2 slots for memory cards ► Play tennis, baseball, golf, bowling & boxing ► Use the Wii Remote controller to mimic sport actions ► Players can use their own Mii characters (63221)

R3399⁹⁵



Wii Nunchuk

► Works together with the Wii Remote ► Contoured to fit perfectly in your hand ► Adds extra buttons, an analogue joystick, and additional motion-sensing control (63222)

R279⁹⁵



R529⁹⁵

Ferrari Challenge
(66217)



R499⁹⁵

Boom Blox
(66216)



Guitar Hero III + Guitar
(65668)

R799⁹⁵



Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
(66214)

R399⁹⁵



Wii Fit

► Use for an extensive array of fun and dynamic activities, including aerobics, yoga, muscle stretches and games ► These activities focus on providing a "core" workout, a popular exercise method that emphasises slower, controlled motions ► Family members will have fun staying active, comparing results and progress on the various Wii channels (65956)

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PLAYSTATION 3



PLAYSTATION® 3 40GB
 ▶ 40GB HDD ▶ Includes all features central to High Definition entertainment experience ▶ Plays Blu-ray Disc movies ▶ Includes Sixaxis wireless controller ▶ Wi-Fi and HDMI connectivity ▶ Not backwards compatible with PlayStation 2 titles (63613)

R4999⁹⁵



R549⁹⁵

Sixaxis Wireless Controller
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PLAYSTATION®3 Blu-Ray Disc (BD) Remote Control
 ▶ Enables remote control over the Blu-ray Disc player features ▶ Connects via Bluetooth (61341)

R299⁹⁵



Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
 (66218)

R599⁹⁵



Battlefield Bad Company
 (66219)

R599⁹⁵



Metal Gear Solid 4
 (66220)

R799⁹⁵



Destroy All Humans, Path of the Furon
 (66221)

R799⁹⁵



Ferrari Challenge
 (66222)

R649⁹⁵



Guitar Hero III + Guitar
 (66570)

R899⁹⁵



Lost Planet Colonies
 (66223)

R599⁹⁵

PlayStation®2

PlayStation®2 Silver Console (K Chassis)
 ▶ Quarter of the size ▶ Built-in modem (55221)

R1699⁹⁵



PlayStation®2 Dual Shock Controller
 ▶ Built-in vibration function ▶ Compatible with all PS games ▶ Available in silver or black (55222, 22655)

R349⁹⁵ EACH



Need for Speed Carbon
 (59871)

R149⁹⁵



Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
 (66225)

R399⁹⁵



Iron Man
 (66226)

R499⁹⁵



Pyramat Sound Booster (G-Flex)
 ▶ Portable audio chair for video games, movies & music ▶ Plug into any game console or portable device (62794)

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R1699⁹⁵

▶ **Selected stores:** Bloemfontein, Canal Walk, Cavendish, Cresta, Eastgate, Gateway, Menlyn, Sandton, Woodmead



Battlefield 2 Modern Combat + Black
 (65891)

R299⁹⁵

PC Games



The Sims 2
 Ikea (66228)

R149⁹⁵



Mass Effect
 (66229)

R349⁹⁵



Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
 (66230)

R299⁹⁵ EACH

▶ **Alone in the Dark**
 (66231)

Assorted PC games

* RELEASE DATES OF GAMES MAY CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE FROM SUPPLIER.

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-OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE



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ON THE DVD



DEMOS

Hot: Race Driver: GRID | Kung Fu Panda | Overclocked: A History of Violence
Classic: Clive Barker's Undying
Independent: Tank Universal | Zombie Shooter

CHEATS

CheatBook Database | May 2008 Update

DRIVERS

ATI Catalyst 8.4 (Windows XP) | NVIDIA ForceWare 169.21 & 174.74 (Windows XP)

EDITORS

The Witcher Adventure Editor (v1.3)

EXCLUSIVE NAG CONTENT

Team Fortress 2 Strategy Guide (Part 1 & Part 2) | NAG über-maps for TrackMania Nations Forever

FREE GAMES

Cactus Arcade Collection | Driving Speed 2 | Hello Panda | TrackMania Nations Forever | Voxelstein 3D

FREE MUSIC

Nine Inch Nails: The Slip

MAPS

C&C Kane's Wrath Map Pack | Portal Flash Version Remake

MODIFICATIONS

Dungeon Siege: Ultima 5 Lazarus (v1.20) | Half-Life 2: Get a Life (v1.0 & v1.1 Update)

PATCHES

Hellgate: London (v1.2 SP) | The Witcher (v1.3)

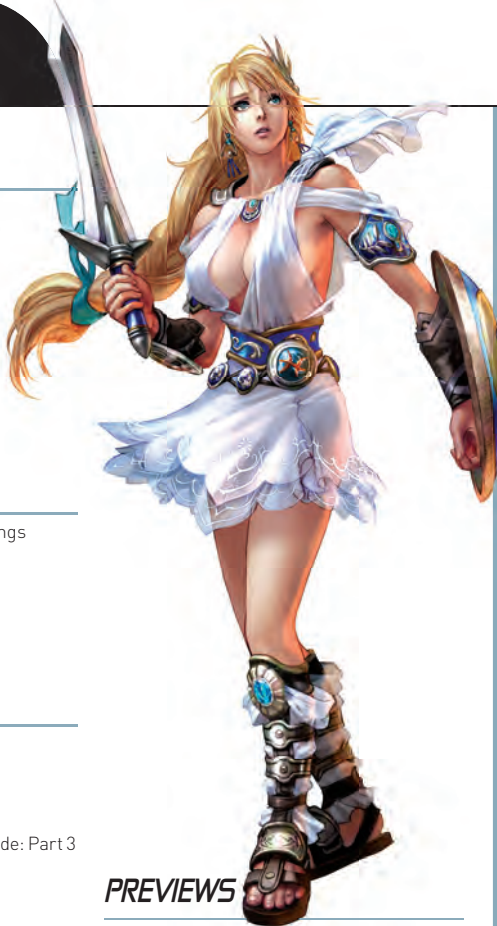
UTILITIES

foobar2000 (v0.9.5.2) | Google Earth (v4.3) | SpaceTime 3D (v6) | Winamp (v5.53)

VIDEOS

Game Trailers: Age of Conan | Battle of the Bands | Biohazard 0 | BOOM BLOX | Bourne Conspiracy | Condemned 2 | Crash Bandicoot | Dead Space | Echochrome | Face Breaker | Gears of War 2 | GRID | Gran Turismo 5 Prologue | Haze | Mario Kart Wii | Project Origin | Persona 3 | Speed Racer | Rayman Raving Rabbids 3 | Pure | The World Ends With You | World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Liche King & much, much more!

Extra Content: GameTrailers.com - Top Ten Years of Gaming | ScrewAttack.com - Videogame VAULT (8 New Episodes!) | GameTrailers.com - Star Wars Retrospective (Episodes 1 - 4)



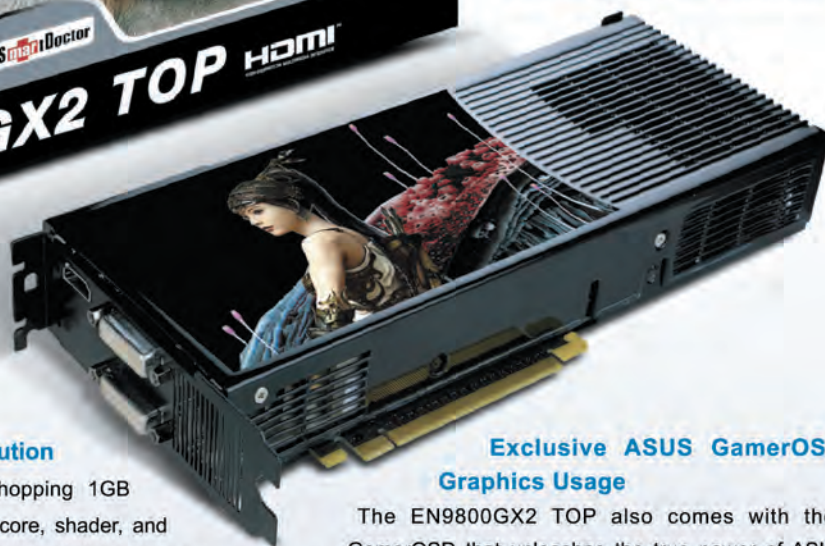
ASUS EN9800GX2 TOP

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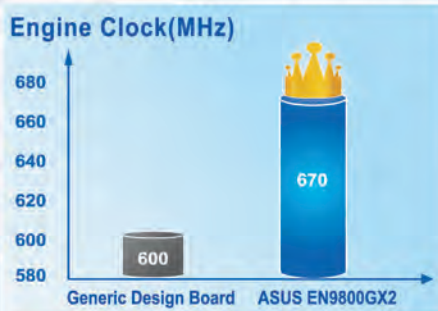


For those of you who want to experience the very best in graphical speeds, then look no further than the ASUS EN9800GX2 TOP/2D/1G. This immaculately designed graphics card features overclocked dual GeForce 9800 GPUs - providing jaw-dropping 11% engine clock improvements over standard graphic card variants. Equipped with a massive 1G framebuffer, this powerful piece of hardware is deservedly regarded as the World's Fastest graphics card - bar none; and will provide true-to-life HD gaming and picture-perfect HD movie playback. Additionally, it comes bundled with the integrated SmartDoctor feature for Shader Clock overclocking, as well as the hottest DX10 game, Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts.



The World's Fastest Graphics Solution

The EN9800GX2 TOP features a whopping 1GB framebuffer, and provides gamers with core, shader, and memory clock performance boosts from 600MHz up to 670MHz, 1500MHz up to 1675MHz, and from 2GHz up to 2.13GHz respectively. This generates an astounding 3DMark06 score of 16936, which translates into an astonishing 11% improvement in terms of core performance when compared to any other reference designed board; and up to 50% faster speeds than generic GeForce 8800 Ultras!



▲ ASUS EN9800GX2 TOP Provides Enhanced Performances

Exclusive ASUS GamerOSD for Versatile Graphics Usage

The EN9800GX2 TOP also comes with the exclusive ASUS GamerOSD that unleashes the true power of ASUS' VGA cards. This feature delivers GPU overclocking from onscreen displays during gameplay - allowing you real-time performance upgrades when you require it. You can even choose to record live gaming action and broadcast it live over the Internet.

Hottest DX10 Game Bundle: Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts

Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts is the new episode in the highest-rated strategy game series. With unprecedented game realism through superb lighting effects, mission persistence, improved vehicle and soldier AI, enhanced physics and a dynamic weather system, this game sets new visual realism standards for the RTS franchise. With the powerful performance of the ASUS EN9800GX2 TOP/G/2DI/1G, you will be able to enjoy the full graphical splendor of what the game can truly offer.



CONFESSIONS OF A GAMER

"Hi everyone, my name is Michael and I'm a retired gamer. It all started when real life and work started getting in the way of my gaming. I stopped playing games for fun. I became trapped in a cycle of trying to rank up in Battlefield 2, improve my Xbox 360 LIVE chess score and for fun I usually ended up playing Burnout Revenge. I never tried anything new and even though I had all the games, I never played them. I hated what I was becoming."

Dramatised for publication

BINGE GAMING AND THE POINT OF IT ALL...

So why buy a gaming magazine or read a Website's latest preview on the most-exciting next biggest thing since the last one that now features 'rot scoping', pixel-based gyro-metric polygons with biased artificial intelligence that sharpens up the inverse game dynamic like you've never seen before?

Well for one thing they really work, but first some honesty... I have, in the past, wondered if this whole 'get free games scheme*' is really working out for everyone involved. We get the games, we review games, you buy those games, people disagree or agree and the whole thing is repeated each month with some new games. Sure enough, it's working commercially because we've recently increased our print run and are now in more stores such as Woolworths, Dion Wired and some Pick 'n Pays.

I had a revelation the other week. I now know they do work because when I came out of gaming retirement I was stuck as to which games to play. So I ended up looking at all the best games of recent times (based on scores in magazines and websites and general positive opinions from the same places) and am now working my way through *Portal*, *Call of Duty 4* and *BioShock*. Don't look so shocked: a gaming drought can happen to anyone. Needless to say, I'm laughing off all the work stuff these days and playing my way through as many games as possible. The overall point here is to make sure you do your homework before spending your money. If you knew how many people bought the recent *Transformers* games you'd be shocked.

ENOUGH ALREADY

Okay... that's all I'm in the mood for – the time is 11:29 on the Friday the issue is uploaded to the printer's FTP. This one has been a little difficult to get out thanks to a thousand little problems: late advertising material (you know who you are), Internet problems, late nights, a laptop with a USA plug, articles not arriving in time, *GTA IV*, running out of milk and a little kidney failure thanks to overdosing on energy drinks.

Enjoy the issue and if you open the magazine in the middle somewhere and stick your nose deep into spine (press it in there hard), give it a good long sniff and you'll probably be able to smell the blood, sweat and tears that went into this one.

Later,

Michael James
Editor

*The original idea behind starting a gaming magazine was really just about getting sponsored high-end hardware and consoles – check, and all the free games you can shake a stick at – check.



COVER STORY

Well the cover as it stands is more or less what it's supposed to be. We were let down a little by Vivendi Games because they didn't get the requested artwork in time. I think Sony was to blame because they didn't approve the artwork I wanted quickly enough (two weeks). The original concept was to use a high-resed image of the Proton Pack from *Ghostbusters* as our main cover image. There was also supposed to be a Q&A session with the developers of the game but that also didn't arrive in time – I guess dark Africa isn't a priority for them. Oh well. However, *Ghostbusters* isn't really the reason for us putting that logo on the cover – it's on there because it's the best iconic representation of the scary and spooky genre we could think of, so enjoy all the monster and horror stuff in this issue and perhaps we'll run the Q&A when we get it (sometime after Christmas).



DON'T MISS THIS...

In case you miss the competition on page 93, don't. We've put *TrackMania United Forever* on the DVD. This is a free racing game with a track editor. Use the editor to build your own cool tracks and then send them to us and win a prize. Not only do you win a prize, but we'll put all the decent tracks on the next DVD (probably August). Besides this, *TrackMania* is consuming time in the office. We're playing it, we're building tracks for it and believe it or not, we're even smack talking each other about it. It's become our new 'deathmatch' game of choice, although I personally prefer the smell of seared flesh over burnt rubber with my morning coffee.

NAG

The Butcher of Bakersfield

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The Bride of Frankenstein

miktar.dracon@tidemedia.co.za

Norman Bates

regardt.van.der.berg

Leatherface

neo.sibeko

Count Dracula, as portrayed by Bela Lugosi

alex.jelagin

Freddy Krueger

nati.de.jager

Zombies

adam.liebman
clive.burmeister
justin.slabbert
rory.smith-belton
toby.hudon
danny.day
james.o'ehley
megan.hughes
tarryn.van.der.byl
walt.pretorius

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Gozer the Gozerian

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Wait for a sign from Gozer the Traveller; he will come in one of the pre-chosen forms. During the rectification of the Vuldronai, the Traveller came as a large and moving Torb. Then, during the third reconciliation of the last of the Meketrex Suppliants, they chose a new form for him – that of a Giant Sloar! Many Shubs and Zuuls knew what it was to be roasted in the depths of the Sloar that day I can tell you!

NAG REVIEW RIGS SUPPLIED BY:

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DISCLAIMER: All letters sent to NAG are printed verbatim.

LETTER OF THE MOMENT

FROM: D3z

SUBJECT: 100%?

"I HAVE BEEN READING YOUR magazine since December 2003 and I have always enjoyed it and all of its extras etc. Now the reason I'm writing this letter is because of your ratings. No I'm not going to make a big fuss and demand that you re-review all of the effected games, but I do think you should reconsider the scores you hand out. When I read a NAG from volume 8 and I go to the beginning of the reviews section, you say that 50 is about average and maybe it was because the issue with Darwinia came out we were all wowing because it got 97 (the highest so far that we had seen). But if I look at the newer issues I can find a game that got 100% in almost every issue. If a game gets 100% doesn't that mean it is perfect, doesn't that mean there's nothing wrong with it? I think it does and I you give a game 100% then here is a list of requirements I think it should meet: Have some form of multiplayer (preferable not only internet); is fun to play; is challenging; is not too short but

not too long; be original; not be repetitive in your tests you did not find a single bug and you can create your own maps (only applies to racing; puzzle and RTS). So although it is your magazine, I think there should be some sort of checklist with requirements like these. Please take this as constructive criticism and at least make it difficult for a game to get a perfect score. The rest of the magazine is great though."

I couldn't agree with you more. Although we don't award a big score like that every issue, it would seem that every two years or so the scores in NAG start going up and up, and then someone sends in a letter like this and we wake up and rethink the whole process. Although we're not supposed to judge new games based on old ones, it's hard to figure out what makes a game better than the last one - especially if the old one scored 97% for example. Never fear. I'll slap a few reviewers around and we'll try to make sure it doesn't happen again (well at least not right away). Ed.



The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by Megarom. The winner receives two games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch.

IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Cyber mail: letters@tidemedia.co.za

Important: Include your details when mailing us, otherwise how will you ever get your prize if you win...

From: Brandon

Subject: Hell no...

"SO HERE'S THE DEAL, if we had only 1 type of PC (including all hardware specification) and one console that would be boring and most of all take out the option of choice. It would be easy to choose between pc console and portable as these would only be 3 available. But how could we brag as to who has the better gaming system. How could we brawl our mates after a drunken argument on the Xbox vs. PS3 vs. Wii if we only had 1 out of the 3. So yes I say it I love the fact that we have all these consoles. Add more to this line up and we can have more drunken debates and brawls. After all without choice what would we be?"

Can you rather keep a lid on all this drunken brawling talk? We spend a lot of time and effort trying to convince our advertisers that our readers are intelligent, high-income earners who are passionate about their hobby (well I guess you do qualify on the passionate part). If they knew people like you were reading the magazine, we'd be in big trouble. Also, get some new friends. Ed.

From: Dylan

Subject: Indiana Jones Movie Article - Waste of Paper or Not?

"I THINK MANY PEOPLE HAVE been awaiting the Indiana Jones movie. It is one of those movies that will stand the test of time. Its popularity has its own fan base I am sure, just like Star Wars and Lord of the Rings for other people. Some readers feel the article is one that belongs in the gutter or the bottom of a birdcage, whilst other readers just find it another couple of pages of entertaining reading. Considering you have DVD reviews, the article does not seem out of place. Also, since you had the game reviewed it does not seem like a total waste of paper when the movie matches the game. The article is really fascinating for the facts you never knew. It would be really ironic if Indiana Jones makes a close match to the box office tallies of Pirates of The Caribbean, Spider-Man and Harry Potter considering the low usage of CGI. All in all a little variety never killed anyone, maybe the next combination will be the James Bond game and movie article. Who knows? Just do not start doing articles on romance movies."

Thanks for the feedback and don't worry: we'll steer clear of the chick flicks. Incidentally, we only received positive feedback about our Indiana Jones feature. Ed.

From: Marius

Subject: Are you a piracy supporter?

"WHAT MAKES PEOPLE SUPPORT piracy? Is it the fact that games are so expensive or that cinemas have unnecessary age restrictions. Maybe it's because pirate games and movies are so freely available. One can purchase them at flea markets, shops or even from your friendly neighbourhood hawk. A few years back it was much cheaper buying or renting a pirate copy. Taking all your friends to the cinema wasn't an option as it would have made a serious dent in your budget. Cinemas have now made it affordable to watch movies. The only thing holding us back now is the age restrictions. I understand that age restrictions are there for a purpose but surly they can make exceptions.

Ironman started on the 1st of May. Since I heard the movie was on the way I've been planning a day to go and watch it with my son. We went early to eliminate being stampeded. As I was about to purchase 2 tickets I was told that my son can't go in. No under 13 are allowed. Now you try and explain to a 4 year old why he can't watch Ironman. When I tried I got the reply: "But I've got Ironman on my duvet cover, posters and on my chair. Why can't I watch?" My plans just fell flat on the spot. We ended up going home with heavy hearts. I don't understand the age restriction. My son watched all 3 Spiderman movies and Transformers at the cinema. Now when Hellboy 2, The Hulk and Wolverine premiere I shouldn't even bother going. One thing they have to keep in mind is that children are behind the sales of merchandise linked to these kinds of movies. Spiderman 3 was releases long ago but still children buy action figures. Why go and buy a toy if you haven't watched the movie. I haven't joined the Dark side if you are wandering. So we still haven't watched Ironman."

You do know that Spider-Man and Transformers are also age-restricted movies. The reason why small children aren't supposed to see movies like this is so that they don't become traumatised and too scared to sleep at night. Winnie the Pooh and Barney the Dinosaur are suitable for a four-year-old, so please keep your kid away from all the violence and death - there's plenty of time for that when he grows up. Also, please don't try to use age restrictions as an excuse to support piracy - that's just madness. Ed.

From: Eben

Subject: Best thing since bubblegum

"I PROMISE MYSELF THAT I would not do this, but when I opened my email account, I heard a little voice saying "do it", so here goes. I know you have heard this about 768909876 times already, but I have to get it off my heart. NAG, I love you, all the intelligent people working for NAG, writing all those articles, bringing the latest news, writing funny stuff that doesn't make sense to the normal person, but are appreciated much by the above average intelligent people buying and adoring NAG, it is almost too much to handle. You are the best thing since bubblegum. Thank, sniff (tears of joy)."

Printing a love letter like this is dangerous because soon everyone starts sending in soppy letters in the hope that our vanity will override our common sense and we'll print them all. So instead of spamming us with your letters of praise, rather help us where it really counts and buy two copies of the magazine every month. :) Ed.

From: Joe

Subject: An old classic request

"I AM [NAME WITHHELD TO protect the innocent], a NAG-buyer for many years now, at least 9 or so. I really appreciate the effort you guys put into the NAG magazine and the NAG DVD. Especially the March issue with the kick-ass DVD you issue that contained lots of game trailers on. There is a special request I would like to ask you, that involves the NAG DVD. A few years back, can't remember the year or month; you brought out the old classic GTA2 on you DVD - the full version. So, I thought to myself, we grew up with games like that in the 90's and enjoyed every second of it. It's really sad that children theses are born straight into games like Crysis, GTA4 or Star Wars - Force Unleashed... and not really know what real appreciated gaming was about before kick ass graphics and game physics. I would like to ask you if you can bring out the old classic



Commandos 1 – full versions onto a future Nag DVD. If you can put both 2 titles of Commandos 1: Behind Enemy Lines and Beyond the Call for duty, on the DVD it would be really great! [It's at least 400MB together, I think?]. I struggle to download these two classics from the Internet, because there is always the American Dollar issue and registrations and so on and so on... I do understand these terms, but really, no one plays this old stuff anymore and should be free. Ironically, I did saw 'Behind Enemy Lines' in Top-CD, CNA and all the other game and music stores way back, but didn't buy it, because there was usually something else to buy and now I kind of regret not buying it. The reason why I would like to have them again, is because I collected the Commandos games, probably because it was my very first game that I played. I did have Commandos 1 (both titles), but lost it somewhere or borrowed it to someone and, Commandos 1 is the only one missing from my 'collection'. It's just the good old memories of playing those games that wants me to mission through those levels again. The other thing that might be a problem is the Windows XP or Vista compatibility for these DOS games. I'm sure Commandos 1: Beyond the Call for duty will still work in XP, but Commandos 1: Behind Enemy Lines probably won't, most likely, because it was released in, 1995."

Because you seem like a reasonable person, you'll get a reasonable reply. We can't just go and stick full games on the NAG DVD without a care in the world. These games, unless they're released for free on the Internet, still hold value for someone somewhere in the world. So until they are declared as free to everyone, you'll just have to pay for them; and I'm assuming when you say 'American Dollar' issue you mean you don't have the money because plastic is really the international currency of choice. Ed.

From: Jack

Subject: Fan art

"HEY GUYS, GREAT TREE carcass, keep it up. This is Major Motoko Kusanagi flashing her support for you guys. There are no copyrights present on the original images I used."

Old Jack here took an existing piece of artwork and simply stuck the NAG logo on top. Please note: this is not what we're looking for. Put a little effort into your creations and you'll get the acknowledgement you deserve. Ed.

From: Sean

Subject: Game suppliers

"I STAY IN CAPE TOWN centre (or the city bowl as some like to call it) and I am a gaming freak. The only thing of Cape Town is that gamers have three places to go to and get their games, which are Incredible Connection, Musica and CNA. Well, I don't know how the other branches are in the rest of the country and if they do supply a better selection of PC games, but here in Cape Town they mainly focus on console games. There are shops that have better selection of PC games, but they are out in the suburbs and everyone really does not have the means or the time to get to them. So, I was thinking of opening up a shop here in Cape Town that will specialise in PC games and if someone is looking for a particular game then I will try and get a hold of whatever they are looking for, but this is now the problem that I am facing. I can't seem to find suppliers and I am hoping that you could help me out here, since you get games to review each month I thought that you would be able to hook me up with some contacts. If you would be so kind as to point me in the right direction, I would appreciate it."

See pages 70 and 71 in this issue. Everything you need is right there. Ed. **NAG**

ON THE FORUM

QUESTION: Yes, GTA4 rocks your socks, but what's wrong with it? What don't you like about it? What small niggly thing bugs you until you curse the lazy developers? Or, if nothing about it bugs you at all, just say so.

ioioioio: "I haven't got it yet but I read somewhere it could do with a 2 Player mode (Split-screen). I have to agree. GTA-SA two Player wasn't the best, but it still gave me some good times."

Vexo: "I am not one that searches for something to moan about. I rather enjoy the game and focus on all the effort Rockstar put in to create their latest master piece!"

Cleric: "2 things, one big, one small. Big thing: No local multiplayer (specifically system-link) support. I would have loved to LAN this game. It feels made for it. Small thing: Pop-in in new areas, while understandable for a game of this size, reminds me that it's just a game."

siemens: "The fact that I don't have it."

DXeXodus: "The sad, yet undeniably true fact that it is not available on PC. That is what is wrong with it. It is almost enough to make me buy a console. Wait! no! Its all a conspiracy. I will not submit."

Domanskip: "There are only a couple of things that really bug me: 1. Lack of local multiplayer. 2. Some problems with locking-on from cover. 3. Graphical annoyances. Other than that, it's absolutely awesome."

FTB_Screamer: "Haven't play it yet, waiting for PC version. But if they released it on the PC and it still doesn't have LAN support. I wouldn't like that. :?"

Machine: "The long and painful wait for a probable but not definite PC release. I always preferred playing the GTA series on PC."

Gambit: "There a few issues: 1. The control scheme is frustrating to me at times. The shooting while driving as an example. 2. Although the game is pretty in most instances, it does have some downright ugly bits as well, that remind you of the previous GTA titles. 3. Frustration! In most cases due to my stuff ups, but I just cannot believe how many times I would spend a lot of time on a mission, and I would stuff it up in one second causing me to have to reload and start over again."

Gammaray: "1) In terms of AI, your friend (or who ever drives with you on dates/missions/excursions) will always get hit by oncoming traffic (and die most of the times) if you parked like an ass on the road. 2) The mini games/missions are less rewarding than the ones in San Andreas. (So far) 3) Can't fly planes?! Seriously!"

XennoX: "1. They paid so much attention to detail, but yet left some things out, like convertible roofs and indicators. 2. Planes, did they mysteriously disappear? 3. What happened to the, 'buy this property for extra missions' thing that came with Vice City? That rocked!"

Fredder: "Like the others, the fact that a PC version is not available... Sucks to be me..."

GenericUserName: "The fact that you can only get 'warm coffee' ok seriously, the

spongy handling of the cars, no planes available to fly anymore and who is actually going to search for 200 'flying rats'."

Kharrak: (Edited for space.) "I still get annoyed at any checkpoint saving system. The driving controls, though absolutely fine in slow to medium low speeds, are quite frustrating when chasing something, or racing against the clock, and trying to turn at high speeds. The constant calls from friends to hang out, especially when (a) you are just about to go somewhere such as your hideout, or (b) the person calling is inconveniently placed distance wise does tend to stretch the player a bit. The cover system."

Shinigami636: "I totally love it. The graphics are awesome, compared to the older ones and the size of the map. And the story is also quite entertaining."

Q-Man: "The thing I hate most about it is the fact I have to live in the real world."

Chuluka: "The fact that the PC version probably won't happen. Honestly!"

FIRECAT: "That it's a console exclusive."

Reneg8de: "Why can't I go for a hair cut, tattoo or even work out at the gym? And the airplanes as well.... How I miss skydiving!!"

MrDeVil_909: "I hate the fact that I'm weak willed and couldn't resist buying GTA 4 when I saw a pile at the store. :/"

-Bouncer-: "I was too late for the collector's edition.... oh and no planes? No local lan?"

Doom6197: "I do not own a console, so I have not played it yet. But I hear that the game Kicks Ass. I am just waiting for the PC version because PC=MODS"

Takiro: "The addiction! it's jonesing bad!"

Karuji: "Its GTA"

Jest3r: "I hate the fact that direction and crouching is on the same button. Press the direction button down by accident, and instead of sprinting away from the cops, you start SNEAKING away! Hilarious, but very frustrating. I also hate most of the music they chose."

brazed: "The price tag."

Raven Gold: "The biggest flaw is the fact there is no PC version, and because of that they have lost one customer."

Ruandre: "For some reason Liberty City is littered with half pipes (not to mention full skate parks) even though there isn't any skateboarding feature. DLC perhaps? Or just shameless teasing?"

dolfieman: "I don't like the torture of waiting for the PC release, inevitably causing me to buy a console, thus heading to the evil developers plans, & giving them more reason for world dominance."

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE NAG FORUMS: <http://forums.tidemedias.co.za>

GTA IV: THE AFTERMATH

Only on WEAZEL!



IT'S OUT, IT'S CORRUPTING the youth, it's rocking our consoles, and it's dominating the entertainment industry with fistfuls of Molotov cocktails. Niko Bellic might not turn out to be much, but his criminal misadventures in Liberty City certainly have – *GTA IV*'s release hauled in over \$300 million in launch day sales, and some \$600 million in total by the end of the week.

"We knew *Grand Theft Auto IV* would break new ground in terms of the player's experience, with its compelling story line, extraordinary gameplay and action that ranges over a broad urban canvas. Now, it has broken sales and rating records as well," said Strauss Zelnick, chairman of *GTA IV* publisher Take-Two, adding that the "first week performance represents the largest launch in the history of interactive entertainment, and we believe these retail sales levels surpass any movie or music launch to date."

No sooner was the game out, than Microsoft and Sony began the predictable squabble over console-specific sales data. With one contradiction following another, it does appear that the Xbox 360 version managed to maintain a minor advantage in the UK, with a launch week ending at 60% overall

retail dominance. Across the Atlantic, US retailer GameStop is reporting this figure to be as high as two to one in Microsoft's favour, with Xbox Director of Product Management, Aaron Greenberg, citing the advantage that "the majority of third-party franchises are being developed first on our platform so they end up playing best on Xbox 360, and when you combine that with Xbox LIVE, we expect this trend to continue as more multiplatform releases hit the market." Sony's Peter Dille, Senior VP of Marketing, was quick to retort that, "GameStop probably does a little bit better with the early adopter crowd. There's a larger installed base right now on Xbox 360 than on PS3. So it's not surprising that there's going to be more selling on Xbox 360 than PS3."

Meanwhile, Rockstar is probably too busy counting its money to care – or perhaps trying to figure out what's wrong with their game. Early reports of the opening cut-scene locking up the game on both platforms, and sketchy multiplayer stability on the PS3 rapidly escalated into a fullscale drama. A patch has since been released for the PS3, although some users are still experiencing difficulties.

BY THE NUMBERS

99%

GTA IV's average score on aggregator Websites www.metacritic.com and www.gamerankings.com, making it the highest-rated game on both sites

1 million

Number of concurrent users playing *GTA IV* on Xbox LIVE over launch weekend

3.6 million

Number of copies sold on launch day

6 million

Number of copies sold in the first week

\$50 million

The sum Microsoft paid Rockstar to develop additional exclusive-downloadable content for the Xbox 360

\$100 million

Reported development budget for *GTA IV*

\$2 billion

EA's hostile takeover bid for Take-Two

THE BEATING HEART OF LIBERTY CITY

In probably the most bizarre Easter egg turned up in the game so far, intrepid spelunkers discovered that Liberty City's Statue of Happiness has an enormous and rather grotesque heart suspended on chains and exuding a creepy sort of humming sound. If you want to see this for yourself, grab a chopper and bail out on the uppermost platform. Look for the door marked, "No hidden content through here".





BIG DADDY FOR AN OSCAR

After much rumour and speculation, some of the mud has stuck to the wall. *BioShock* is definitely on its way to the silver screen.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN trilogy director, Gore Verbinski, has officially been signed on by Universal Pictures to direct and produce the movie adaptation of *BioShock*. In the May issue of *NAG*, we quoted Verbinski as saying, "After working seven years straight on five movies back to back, I picked up my game controller and started playing. I just was blown away by the potential. I can't quite put my finger on it, but I feel that we are on the brink of something phenomenal." No prizes for guessing which game he was playing... John Logan, Academy Award-nominated writer of *Gladiator*, *The Aviator* and *Sweeney Todd* is rumoured to be doing the screenplay. The rumour mill has been chewing on a *BioShock* movie for ages with *Pan's Labyrinth* director Guillermo del Toro being mentioned in the past as well as tenuous links to various other actors and studios. Considering the heavyweights behind this adaptation it's most likely the biggest videogame movie production to date and if everything works out, could be the defining moment for the otherwise lukewarm movie-to-game genre.

A big hit with both the critics (that's us) and the consumers (that's you), since its release in 2007, *BioShock* has sold over two million units worldwide. The game has garnered some of the highest ratings in videogame history with numerous "Game of

the Year" awards and a www.metacritic.com average rating of 96 on both, PC and Xbox 360. Also note that a *BioShock* sequel should be with us in 2009.

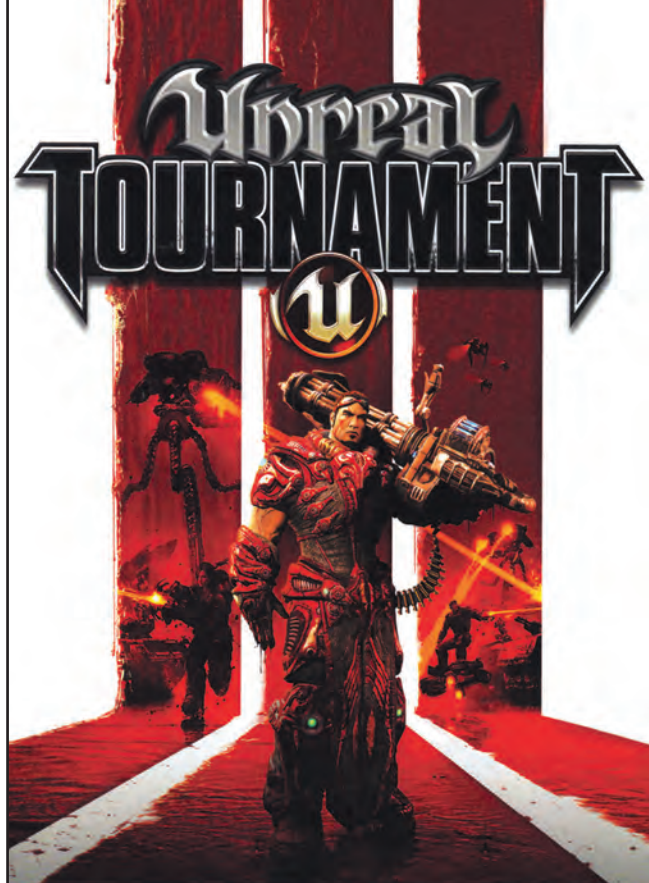
As you should probably know by now *BioShock* takes place in an underwater city called Rapture. In the game world, the character you play crash lands near a secret entrance to the city and quickly finds out everything has gone to hell. The graphics, environment, characters, story and practically everything else in the game is a finely woven tapestry of wonder and intrigue. Not many games have captured the imagination of gamers around the world like *BioShock* has. "I think the whole utopia-gone-wrong story that's cleverly unveiled to players is just brimming with cinematic potential... Of all the games I've played, this is one that I felt has a really strong narrative," said Verbinski.

The interesting thing to watch for is how the unique world design of Rapture and its inhabitants will translate to the big screen. Considering the excellent imagery in *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the big budget this movie will undoubtedly attract, there shouldn't be anything to worry about. No release date has been confirmed but best guesses place it late 2009 or 2010.

RUMOUR: THIRD-PERSON HALO PREQUEL?

Last year, Red Storm creative director Christian Allen (whose most noticeable projects include *Ghost Recon*) joined Bungie to work on an as-of-yet-unnamed title. Then, rumours started circulating (mostly from *Electronic Gaming Monthly*) that the first game from Bungie (post-Microsoft since they've split) will be a "third-person *Halo* prequel chronicling early skirmishes between the ODST troops and the Covenant". Basically, that means no Master Chief.

Now, Microsoft has confirmed with MTV that the recent job listing at Microsoft to work on an unnamed project with an "external luminary" is indeed the mysterious *Halo* project involving Peter Jackson. "Microsoft Game Studios has been hard at work collaborating with Peter Jackson and Bungie on the development of [a Peter Jackson-helmed *Halo* project]. At this time, it's necessary to grow the internal team to keep pace with development. Bungie will continue to remain involved in multiple aspects of the *Halo* universe with MGS."



AVAILABLE NOW
ON ALL PLATFORMS



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snippets

YOUR ESSENTIAL INFO, NOW
IN BITE-SIZED PORTIONS!

WII GETS FITTER

EA has revealed an unnamed fitness game that will make use of **Wii Fit's** balance board and will be released under the newly created **Freestyle** label. Peter Moore, previously from Microsoft had this to say about the game: "It can't feel like a workout. The team has to figure out, how do I smile while I'm doing this? You play soccer for 90 minutes; if I say you're going to run five miles you're not gonna want to do that. But you run for five miles playing soccer and you've had a good time." More games for a peripheral like this can only be a good thing.



TAKE ME DOWN...

Windows-based gamers will be happy to know that EA is rebuilding **Burnout Paradise** for the PC (this is also the first time a Burnout title will be appearing on the platform). Apparently, just because it's on the PC gamers everywhere will be getting expanded multiplayer, enhanced online features and community driven content. The big question on everyone's mind is, Will it have menus?

THE WRITING'S
ON THE CELLULOID

John Riccitiello, CEO of Electronic Arts, recently commented that the videogame industry is gaining tremendous momentum, this off the back of recent mutterings that **GTA IV** would hurt Iron Man's box-office results. He went on to say, "There is more interest today from Hollywood to make movies out of our games than there is interest in our industry to make games out of their movies. There's a big reset happening now." Hooray for gaming then...



WE SHALL PREVAIL

AFTER TAKING A BEATING last year by Microsoft, Sony looks set to dominate in 2008. The lead start of the Xbox 360 did play a significant role in this, as well as the unstoppable *Halo 3* last year, but things are looking up for Sony, who announced at their PlayStation Day event, that they had taken the lead in the UK, and this despite the 15-month head start Microsoft had enjoyed. Naturally, their Blu-ray bet has paid off significantly as well as the recent refresh of the PlayStation

Network. "We've only really begun to scratch the surface with PlayStation 3, but I am confident that given the long life cycle we have planned for the machine, we are going to have a very good install base in all of the major territories," said Kaz Hirai (SCEA). "I am very confident that after the ten-year life cycle, we will have the install base that we are looking for, and that is obviously to be in the leadership position." So, it looks like the PS3 is here to stay... ;)



THE MUMMY EXHUMED

The *Mummy* movies have always been met with great success; but what many don't realise is that each film has had a tie-in game to add to the story. The latest of these games, which will tie in to the upcoming film instalment entitled, *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* and will feature the voices of all the main cast members including Brendan Fraser and Jet Li, has been set for release about a week after the movie hits cinemas. While the previous games might not have been as successful as the movies, Vivendi Games and its recent subsidiary, Sierra Entertainment, have spared no expense to make sure the third will not suffer the same fate. This game will feature intuitive fighting systems in which the players will be able to switch seamlessly from hand-to-hand combat to guns, while at the same time having to use all their puzzle-solving skills to make it through each level.

While Sierra Entertainment has released little information on the game, it has been confirmed that Eurocom Studios will be developing it for the PS2 and Wii, while A2M will be developing a Nintendo DS version. So far, the game does show some promise.



DOOMED TO BE NEXT

Many will rejoice to know that *Doom 4*™ is on its way. Developer id Software recently posted the news on its Website along with a few job offers.

Doom 3 did receive some mixed reviews when it was released and of course nobody will let them forget the whole flashlight misunderstanding, but that isn't going to stop anyone on the next trip to hell. "Doom is part of the id Software DNA and demands the greatest talent and brightest minds in the industry to bring the next installment of our flagship franchise to Earth," said Todd Hollenshead, CEO, id Software. "It's critical for id Software to have the best creative minds in-house to develop games that meet the standards synonymous with our titles." Although no official news on platform was mentioned, if you dig through the job applications and put two and two together, it looks like *Doom 4*™ will be appearing on PC, Xbox 360 and PS3. Release date, well you know the deal by now... when it's done.

THEY SAID IT...

"I think [the console war] is totally irrelevant. Even in the history of the business, other than something like the Dreamcast, you can do decent business on lots of platforms," he explained. "So the issue is not who wins, it's can an independent publisher do a good business on that platform. We're thinking everything from high-end MMO all the way to cellphones."

THQ executive, Jack Sorenson

"*Grand Theft Auto IV* is the gravest assault upon children in this country since polio. We now have vaccines for that virus... The 'vaccine' that must be administered by the United States government to deal with this virtual virus of violence and sexual depravity is criminal prosecutions of those who have conspired to do this."

[Go on, guess, Ed]

Jack Thompson

"BioShock fans appreciate the depth and complexity of the game, and our partnership with Gore Verbinski will introduce the world of Rapture to an even wider audience. In addition to his impressive body of work, Gore is an avid videogamer and true fan of BioShock. That was extremely important to us in deciding to move forward with this project."

President of 2K Games, Christoph Hartmann



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SECUROM'S EVIL SCHEME FOILED BY BIOWARE

THE IDEA THAT PC gaming has become a cesspool for piracy has really hit the market hard. Of course, this idea has a lot of truth to it. But could this be because of the extreme measures the developers take to protect their games? Lately, these measures have reached an extreme level in that paying gamers have been the ones who have suffered most. One example of this can be seen in the *BioShock* launch when activation servers went down for six hours due to an overload of customer activation attempts. While this may not seem long, to a gamer that has just gotten a game of this magnitude, it is an eternity of torment.

While the *BioShock* incident was bad, it was only the beginning, because now, SecuROM, a software-security solution for games, has come up with a new idea of needing activation every ten days. This new security was to be added to big PC

titles like *Mass Effect* and *Spore*. However, after many complaints by the community at large, BioWare has dropped the idea for *Mass Effect*. This once again shows how committed BioWare is to its consumers and that it actually do listen when the consumers shout. EA, of course, being the publisher for both games, quickly made sure that *Spore* would not implement this same security tool for fear of losing customers. Instead, what has been decided on is that *Mass Effect* will have a one-time activation before it can be played. This will still be online, but it will at least not be a ten-day repeat cycle anymore. For all of you who have dial-up connections or running off those pesky public ones, rejoice because BioWare have once again saved the day!

Unfortunately, it is still unclear as to what EA will implement into *Spore* other than the fact that it will not be the SecuROM method.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

The developer and publisher of the *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* trilogy, Ubisoft, has recently announced a new *Prince of Persia* set to be released at the end of this year for the next-gen consoles. The new *Prince of Persia* (rumoured to be called *Prince of Persia: Prodigy*) will be nothing like the previous titles, however, with a press release claiming that it will "rejuvenate the action-adventure genre in addition to introducing a brand-new illustrative art style."

Not only will the game look completely different to the previous titles, being cell-shaded and having been inspired by Japanese movies and games like *Okami*, *Street Fighter* and *Mirror's Edge*, but the storyline will have no connection with any of the previous titles. The combat in the game has also been subjected to change, focusing more on one-on-one battles instead of numerous enemies. Many of the old favourite features of the original trilogy, such as the Dagger of Time, will not make an appearance in the new title.



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Gamespot



"Its addictive fast action racing and clever puzzle and platform gameplay modes have made it unique amongst PC racers."

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PORTAL SAYS NO...

According to our secret sources, Microsoft rejected **Portal** for Xbox LIVE Arcade, stating size limitations and other issues. Doug Lombardi, VP of marketing at Valve, "I'd love to sell Portal on Xbox LIVE. There's a size limit and all kinds of other things." The size limit for LIVE Arcade titles was increased from 50MB to 150MB in March 2007 so we'll just have to wait and see.



NO PRICE CUTS FOR WII OR DS

Satoru Iwata, **Nintendo** president, has stated that the company isn't likely to drop the price of its hardware this year. "Our earnings projection for the year is not based on hardware price cuts, and I don't think we are going to need them," said Iwata. Nintendo has sold 18.6 million Wii units over the past 12 months. The worldwide total now sits at 24.4 million units.

PLAYSTATION NETWORK TO GET MOVIES

Sony is reportedly in talks with various movie studios to set up a **film-download service for the PlayStation 3** through the PlayStation Network in a similar fashion to what is currently on offer through Xbox LIVE. Peter Dille, senior VP of marketing for SCEA, had the following to say: "While I don't have any new announcements here for the PlayStation Nation, it's already been confirmed that we'll be offering a video service for PS3 in a way that separates the service from others you've seen or used." Not to be outdone by anything Sony does, Ross Honey, senior director of Microsoft's media and entertainment group, commented, "It isn't easy to do this. There is a lot of work to be done in just making this work and getting that movie up in high quality. We've had over a year's experience on how to do this, so we can focus on innovating as opposed to working out the kinks."



TIGER WOODS GIVES BACK

IN AN EFFORT TO add a little more than a minor update to its *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2009*, EA has enlisted the help of Tiger's performance coach, Hank Haney, to help gamers get the best out of the game. But that's not all... the next instalment of this best-selling franchise will also offer a better GamerNet experience and an all-new game engine. "*Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09* is the most authentic golf videogame on the market, and we're excited to bring an immersive experience to the masses," said Executive Producer Mike Taramykin. "Our partnership with Hank Haney provides fans immediate coaching from one of the top minds in golf." If you ever felt a little overwhelmed by all the intricacies and finesse required to understand and apply in golf, then this latest instalment might

just offer the perfect solution. In *PGA Tour 09*, the player's skill level is dynamic and adjusted throughout the round. After each round, Hank will offer customised feedback on the player's efforts, which will hopefully open up the game a little as it fine tunes expert players and helps dig rookies out the rough. It's probably prudent to mention at this point that no matter how much coaching you 'absorb' on the couch, it probably won't have any positive effect on your real-world handicap. Another major improvement to online play is Simultaneous Play, allowing up to four players to play each other on the same hole at the same time, making for quicker and more competitive games. *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2009* should be out and about on the fairways late August 2008 on the Wii, PS2, PS3, PSP and X360.

DING! MIKE TYSON RETURNS...

EA Canada will be doing the honours this time after Electronic Arts proper shut down EA Chicago due to poor retail performance. Previous studio boss, Kudo Tsunoda, won't be working on this fourth game in the series because he's now at Microsoft. Considering they have some serious competition with 2K Sports' *Don King Presents: Prizefighter*, the developers at EA Canada have decided to add some boxing celebrities to the mix. Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali will be playable fighters in the game and it's interesting to note that Mike Tyson hasn't featured in a videogame for over a decade now. As usual with every sports franchise's annual instalment, *FNR 4* will get its fair share of updates to everything and the developers have confirmed a new game engine and as well as greater realism thanks to a new physics-based animation system, which should give players more control over their characters. As with all free-form, physics-based games, anything players should see more variety in their beating of each other. *Fight Night Round 4* will be arriving in 2009 on the PS3 and Xbox 360.

CALL OF DUTY 5

For those of you who are fans of the *Call of Duty* franchise, rejoice, for Activision has announced *Call of Duty 5* to be released sometime before April next year. Unfortunately, not much has yet been said about the game or who exactly will be developing it. All that is known so far is that Treyarch, the guys behind *Call of Duty 3*, have been recruiting applicants with an interest in WWII and FPS games. On the other hand, however, Infinity Ward, the guys behind *COD1*, 2 and 4, could also be developing it, since their last attempt sold over seven million copies. The only certainty is that it'll be a hit.

THE MENLYN PARK GAMING EXPERIENCE

NAG Magazine and Menlyn Park Shopping Centre bring you a teaser to the rAge event at the Dome in October. Menlyn Park Shopping Centre will host a Gaming Tournament from the 26-29 June 2008 and an In-centre exhibition from 24-30 June. Menlyn will also be inviting gamers who would like to compete in the Menlyn Gaming Tournament. The winner of the Menlyn leg will gain automatic entry into the rAge Tournament at The Dome in October, where they will be competing for the ultimate prize, a trip to Germany, to witness one of the biggest gaming events in the world (Dreamhack). The Menlyn Tournament will provide the opportunity for amateur gamers to nurture their skills and interact with the professional gamers on a one-to-one level. Visit www.menlynpark.co.za to book your seat to compete and find out more details on the exhibitors.



THE EVOLUTION OF: HORROR GAMES



Haunted House (1981)



Friday the 13th (1985)



Splatterhouse Wanpaku Graffiti (1989)



Night Trap (1992)



Phantasmagoria (1995)



Ecstasica II (1996)



ObsCure (2004)



Alone in the Dark (2008)



GRAND THEFT PROFIT! SPEAKING in a Major Nelson podcast, perennial guest "e" claims "roughly 40 percent of consoles going out the door had a copy of *GTA IV* going with them". It is assumed he was talking about US sales. **Microsoft** has also chimed in, claiming that 60 percent of all copies of *GTA IV* sold in the US during the first week of sale were for the 360. • **Amazon.com** has listed *God of War III*'s release date as 2 March 2009. Only ten months to go! • Nintendo's new digital-distribution service **WiiWare** has gone live in North America with six titles to download from the online store: *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: My Life as a King* (1,500 Wii Points), *LostWinds* (1,000 Wii Points), *Defend your Castle* (500 Wii Points), *Pop* (700 Wii Points), *V.I.P. Casino: Blackjack* (700 Wii Points) and *TV Show King* (1,000 Wii Points). WiiWare already launched in Japan earlier this year in March, and is said to be available for Europe on 20 May. An interesting WiiWare note: after an hour of playing a game from WiiWare, gamers can give each WiiWare title they own their own review score. The review scores from all gamers will be tallied and the results published on WiiWare. • **Electronic Arts** has managed to secure a commitment for a whopping \$1-billion loan, with which it hopes to (still) acquire Take-Two. • Gardening and piñata care simulator, *Viva Piñata*, is slated to get two sequels according to leaked information from the **Gamer's Day** event held in San Francisco at the time of writing. The one is sub-titled *Trouble in Paradise*, and the other *Scene It!*. • **Sony Computer Entertainment Europe president, David Reeves**, admits that the PlayStation Portable needs more games. "Hand on heart, would we like more PSP games? Yes, we would. We really would," said Reeves speaking exclusively to *GamesIndustry.biz*. In fact, publisher support for Sony's handheld in the West appears to be diminishing fast, with Sierra not having a single new PSP title planned, while big licenses such as *LEGO Indiana Jones* and *WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW* being absent from the PSP entirely. • **Sony** has revealed that the *Gran Turismo* "real driving simulator" series has clocked over 50 million units, across the various PlayStation platforms. The original *Gran Turismo* was released over ten years ago on the PlayStation. "Initially, *Gran Turismo* was an 'alternative' racing game, kind of an outsider in the genre," commented Kazunori Yamauchi, producer of *Gran Turismo*. "And we made it thinking that it would be okay as long as it reached out to 'the select few who would agree with us'." • 2008 seems to be the year for the **PlayStation Portable**, at least in terms of Japan. This year, the PSP has sold almost 1.6 million units in Japan, compared to the Wii, which has sold 1.3 million units so far this year. • Not one to be left off the bandwagon, **EA** is working on a *Wii Fit* title under its newly created Freestyle label. At a three-day EA Sports showcase, once-Microsoft-but-now-EA Peter Moore spoke highly of Nintendo's little balancing board. "We're watching very closely what the *Wii Fit* board does," he said. "We think we have to have a role to play with that mum - the kids have gone to school, she's got 45 minutes on her own, the Wii is there, it's the first console she's ever liked because she can do things herself. And we're working on stuff, trying to work out how we can use EA Sports applications there."



The Game of the Year Edition includes
SR 1.7 and the Add-On Tainted Blood



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TONY HAWK RIDES A SKATE [BOARD]

Activision is promising a ground-up reinvention of the *Tony Hawk* franchise. This is perhaps to counter the critically acclaimed newcomer skate, from Electronic Arts. There are reportedly two different projects in the cooker – one for the DS due later this year and promising some nifty new technology. The other project (given two years of development time) would be the franchise reboot for next-generation systems sometime towards the middle of 2009. *Tony Hawk's Proving Ground* was the last game in the series but failed to set the world on fire like skate did, which probably had something to do with the refocusing – there's nothing like a little competition to wake everyone up.

NASA WANTS ITS MMO FOR FREE

NASA wants an MMO but can't get the \$3-million budget it wanted. So, they're asking any prospective development partner to consider creating and maintaining the **MMORPG** for free under a "non-reimbursable Space Act Agreement". So, while the developer manages a NASA-based MMO for fun and to enhance science, technology, engineering and mathematics, NASA will negotiate brand placement, limited exclusivity and "other opportunities".



PORTAL 2

Kim Swift, in an interview with X-Play, mentioned the existence of a **Portal 2** project, but according to a recent Eurogamer interview with Doug Lombardi from Valve we shouldn't expect it any time soon. Lombardi stated that Valve, wanted to do the sequel justice, not just "cash in" on the lightning-in-a-bottle success of the first-person puzzler. We're making a note here: sad panda.



DEVIL MAY CRY 4 FOR PC

SURPRISE SURPRISE, CAPCOM "is pleased to confirm" that there will be a PC version of the titular *Devil May Cry 4*. But wait, there's more! It will also contain new modes not available to those silly console owners. Now PC gamers will also be able to enjoy the annals of the sword-swinging jerk and his androgynous buddy with the glowing demon arm. Capcom promises the game "this summer", and mentions that alongside the new modes there will also be "enhanced graphics options" and some "additional content". Before its release on the PC, there will be a demo and a benchmark utility, so you can see if your PC is up to specification. Be sure to invest in a gamepad.



CODEMASTERS GETS F1 LICENCE

Rumours about the lucrative Formula 1 Licence, which gives the holder the right to feature all of the Formula 1 teams, cars and drivers as well as all of the Grand Prix circuits, have been circulating madly recently. Electronic Arts was thought to have secured the licence from the previous holder, Sony, who in turn was thought to have abandoned it over a disagreement with the sport's governing body and a large increase in costs (according to www.computerandvideogames.com). Now it has been confirmed that Codemasters, British developer and publisher responsible for *Colin McRae: DiRT* as well as the soon-to-be-released *Race Driver: GRID*, is the new holder of the F1 licence. Boasting that the first F1 title they release will be the first to feature Lewis Hamilton, Codemasters is aiming for a 2009 release based on the 2009 season and using the EGO Engine.

GAMING CHARTS

Look & Listen

DVD • CD • GAMES — MP3 • ACCESSORIES

LOOK & LISTEN RECOMMENDS...

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Battlefield: Bad Company
- 2 Guitar Hero: Aerosmith
- 3 Time Crisis IV
- 4 Dark Sector
- 5 Viking: Battle For Asgard

XBOX 360

- 1 Enemy Territory: Quake Wars
- 2 Universe at War: Earth Assault
- 3 Dark Sector
- 4 Turning Point: Fall of Liberty
- 5 Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 SingStar: Summer Party
- 2 LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures
- 3 Iron Man
- 4 Ford Racing Off Road
- 5 Ultimate Board Games

PC

- 1 Mass Effect
- 2 Alone in the Dark
- 3 The Sims 2 Kitchen & Bath Interior Design Stuff
- 4 Dawn of War: Complete Collection
- 5 The Sims 2 Double Deluxe

PSP

- 1 God of War: Chains of Olympus
- 2 Ford Racing Off Road
- 3 Warriors Orochi
- 4 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 5 Generation of Chaos

WII

- 1 Death Jr.: Root Of Evil
- 2 Hannah Montana: Spotlight World Tour
- 3 Worms: A Space Oddity
- 4 BOOM BLOX
- 5 Dancing Stage Hot Party & Mat



March figures provided by GfK
www.gfksa.co.za

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 Army of Two
- 2 Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
- 3 FIFA 08
- 4 Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- 5 Devil May Cry 4

XBOX 360

- 1 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas
- 2 Project Gotham Racing 3
- 3 Dead or Alive 4
- 4 Army of Two
- 5 FIFA 08

PLAYSTATION 2

- 1 FIFA 08
- 2 Need for Speed: Most Wanted
- 3 Transformers: The Game
- 4 Need for Speed: Underground
- 5 Need for Speed: Carbon

PC

- 1 The Sims 2 Free Time
- 2 Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth
- 3 This Sims Castaway Stories
- 4 The Sims 2 Pets
- 5 Need for Speed: Most Wanted

PSP

- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 FIFA 08
- 3 Need for Speed: ProStreet
- 4 Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters
- 5 The Sims 2 Castaway

WII

- 1 Wii Sports
- 2 Super Mario Galaxy
- 3 Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games
- 4 Wii Play
- 5 Hot Wheels: Beat That!



LORD OF THE RINGS CONQUEST

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW Line Cinema, Pandemic Studios (a division of EA Inc. that brought you the *Star Wars Battlefront* series) is developing *Lord of the Rings: Conquest* for the Xbox 360, PlayStation3 as well as the PC and DS. Set to be released towards the end of 2008, the environment in *Conquest* is based on the world depicted in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy films.

Although the world might look the same, Pandemic Studio is not sticking to the original story line exactly. For the first time players will be given the chance to choose between playing as good or evil in the battle for Middle-earth. In an interview with Eurogamer.de, director Eric Gewirtz explained that there are two campaigns each with their own decently sized story. While the good campaign will follow J.R.R. Tolkien's original story, the evil campaign, which starts close to the end of the Trilogy, "tell[s] the story [of] how Frodo fails, how he dies and how Sauron gets hold of the ring."

The game will apparently feature "every single battle from the movies and

then some" according to IGN's interview with Gerwitz. Says Eric, "We've got Helm's Deep, Pelennor Fields, Minas Tirith, The Black Gates, and then we've got a bunch of other cool stuff like the Mines of Moria, Weathertop, The Shire."

Famous characters will also feature as heroes that players earn through battling foes. Players will also get to alternate between classes, such as Warriors or Mages, every time their avatar expires, which allows for a variety of gameplay.

In Pandemic's press release, Josh Resnick, co-founder and general manager at Pandemic Studio, sounded confident about their new game. "Our experience creating massive, rich, action-packed games means that *The Lord of the Rings: Conquest* will give fans exactly what they want: full control of the blade, bow, and magic to fight its epic battles."

The main campaign can be played as single player or with up to four people co-op while the multiplayer mode will feature up to 16 players.



MONOPOLY

UNTIL RECENTLY, *MONOPOLY*PC games were only allowed to be created by Atari. However, with their recent financial difficulties, they have sold of the rights back to Hasbro, who in turn made a deal with EA. This new deal has already proven beneficial for both parties as a new *Monopoly* game is already in the pipeline. It has been confirmed for release on the

Wii, PS2, 360 and even mobile phones with a portal on Pogo.com for multiplayer. The game will feature all the fun of the original board game, but will come in the form of a collection of mini-games. While this may not be a wise business decision considering the flood of similar games in the market, EA is confident that this game will still be able to be a success.

NINTENDO DS™



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GET IN THE RING

More WWE action than you could shake a scripted fist at

THQ and JAKKS Pacific recently announced a new contender alongside their long-running and hugely popular, 37-million unit shifter *SmackDown* and *SmackDown vs. RAW!* franchise, with *WWE Legends of WrestleMania* for the Xbox 360 and PS3, and an April 2009 release scheduled to coincide with the 25th anniversary event of America's favourite soap opera in Houston, Texas. Nicknamed "The Granddaddy of Them All". The annual *WrestleMania* is the most successful, longest-running professional wrestling event in the world.

"We have generated significant year-over-year growth in key global territories with WWE-licensed videogames, including tremendous success with the *WWE SmackDown vs. RAW!* franchise," said Peter Matiss, Vice President of Global Brand Management over at THQ. "The development capabilities afforded by next-generation hardware, combined with our established history and deep understanding of fighting videogames, allow us to leverage the strength of the WWE brand to further extend our leadership in the fighting videogame genre and bring this new property to market."

No official confirmation yet on the rumble roster set to feature in the game, but the NAG wishlist includes legendary WWE alumni like Hulk Hogan, Sgt. Slaughter, The British Bulldog, The Undertaker, and - with any luck - Mr T.



JUNE RELEASES

Subject to change | Release list and special offers provided by www.kalahari.net

Date	Game	Platforms
6	Battle Over The Pacific	PSP
6	LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	Multi
6	Ninja Gaiden 2 <i>Pre-order for only R499.95</i>	360
6	Spinout	PSP
6	Spongebob & FrieDS	Wii
12	ATV Offroad Fury PRO	PSP
12	Echochrome	PSP
12	Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriot	PS3
12	Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriot LTD Edition	PS3
12	Pool Party with Cue	Wii
12	Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice Platinum	PSP
13	Dragonball Z: Burst Limit	PS3, 360
13	Overlord: Rising Hell	PS3
13	Race Driver: GRID	Multi
13	Sid Meier's Civilisation Revolutions	360
13	Topspin 3	360
13	Wall - E	Multi
15	Battlefield Bad Company <i>Pre-order for only R518.36</i>	PS3, 360
15	Command & Conquer: Kane's Wrath	360
19	Everybody's Golf 2	PSP
19	Roogoo	PC
20	Alone in the Dark	Multi
20	Alone in the Dark Limited Edition	360, PC
20	Sid Meier's Civilisation Revolution	PS3
20	The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Multi
20	Topspin 3	DS, PS3
20	Topspin Tennis	Wii
26	SBK 08	Multi
26	Sid Meier's Civilisation Revolution	DS
27	Bourne Conspiracy	PS3, 360
27	Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	Multi
27	Hannah Montana: Music Jam	DS
27	Hannah Montana: Spotlight World Tour	Wii
27	Kung Fu Panda	Multi

Date	Game	Platforms
27	Mary King's Riding School	DS
27	Pipemania	Multi
27	Unreal Tournament III	360
27	Wall-E	Multi
27	Wii Beach Sports	Wii
27	World Of Warcraft Expansion: Wrath of the Lich King <i>Pre-order for only R252.86</i>	PC
27	WWE 08 Platinum	PS2, PS3
TBA	Big Catch Bass Fishing	DS
TBA	Buzz Quizz TV	PS3
TBA	Buzz Quizz TV with Buzzers	PS3
TBA	Caspar Scare School	DS
TBA	Dimensity	PC
TBA	Dragon Blade	Wii
TBA	Emergency Heroes	Wii
TBA	Ferrari Challenge	Multi
TBA	GO! Explore	PSP
TBA	Imagine Figure Skating	DS
TBA	Jetix Puzzle Buzzle	DS
TBA	Lost Planet Extreme Condition: Colonies	Multi
TBA	Metal Gear Solid 2: Digital Graphic Novel	PSP
TBA	Midnight Play	DS
TBA	Monster Madness: Grave Danger	PS3
TBA	New International Track & Field	DS
TBA	Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	DS
TBA	Okami	Wii
TBA	Power Play Pool DS	DS
TBA	Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 Platinum	PS2
TBA	Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 Classic	PC
TBA	Redbull BC One	DS
TBA	SingStar 2	PS3
TBA	SingStar Pop Hits 4	PS2
TBA	Soul Nomad	PS2
TBA	Sports Island	Wii
TBA	The Sims 2: IKEA Stuff	PC

THE NUMBERS

100 MILLION

Copies of The Sims sold worldwide
[source: Electronic Arts]

22

Languages The Sims is sold in
[source: Electronic Arts]

60

Countries The Sims is sold in
[source: Electronic Arts]

Electronic Arts: The Sims special achievement

4.3 MILLION

Unique visitors per month to
www.thesims2.com [source: Electronic Arts]

70 MILLION

Users that have downloaded user-generated
creations [source: Electronic Arts]

\$1 BILLION

EA Secures Loan for Potential Take-Two
Buyout [source: Electronic Arts]



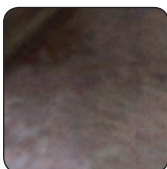
BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY



THIS DAY IN GAMING: MAY

1

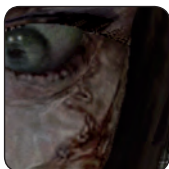
(1999) EA releases *Dungeon Keeper 2* for the PC in the United States, and more S&M fanboys are created.



17

(2004) Konami releases *Silent Hill 4: The Room*.

25



26

(2001) Funcom releases *Anarchy Online* for the PC, replacing magic with nanotechnology.

3

(1986) Nintendo releases *Super Mario Bros. The Lost Levels* (SMB 2) for the NES in Japan. Many people are still confused.



19

(1999) *Counter-Strike*, a modification for *Half-Life* is released.

(2000) Microsoft acquires Bungie Studios.

27

(LAN) The Merriment LAN (Meyerspark) www.langames.co.za.



12

20

(LAN) INSOMNIA (Johannesburg)
(LAN) Organised Chaos (No Venue Specified)
www.langames.co.za.

28

5

(1993) Nintendo releases *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* for GameBoy in Japan. It is dangerous to go alone.

13

(2002) Sony announces a \$250-million campaign to promote the PlayStation in the US.

21

(LAN) Mayhem (Boksburg)
www.langames.co.za.

29

(2000) Blizzard releases *Diablo II* for the PC and Mac. PC and Mac, at the same time. Whoa.

6

(LAN) Evolution LAN (Kempton Park)
www.langames.co.za.

14

(LAN) Quaterly Battletan CSS Comp (Johannesburg)
www.langames.co.za.

22

(1994) Playmates releases *Earthworm Jim* for the Super Nintendo. Groovy!

(2000) Eidos releases *Deus Ex* for the PC.

30

(2000) Activision releases *Dark Reign 2*, which reinvented something that didn't need to be.



23

(1996) Nintendo releases the Nintendo 64 console in Japan along with *Super Mario 64*. The console went on to sell over 30 million units.

8

(1990) Capcom releases *Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers* for the NES in Japan. Bet you have the theme stuck in your head now.



24



CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Every month we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line [June Caption].

APRIL CONTEST
NAG'S LAME

ATTEMPT: "For the last time, I said put the *\$#%&! seat DOWN!"



MARCH WINNER

"Armed with a timer and a shaver, it was time to find the truth: black with white stripes or..."

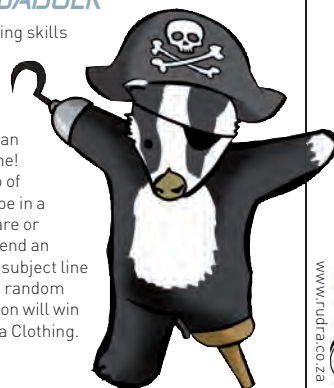
Jonathan Funcke

vivendi
GAMES

RULES: (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things. (3) Obey all posted speed limits. (4) Never run with scissors. (5) There is no spoon. (6) Don't tell me what I can't do!

BADGER, BADGER, BADGER

Thanks to the utterly rubbish hiding skills of our art department, the May issue badger was found by well over 300 NAG readers. But as they say... there can be only one and that one is none other than Waldorf Van Den Berg... Well done! Hopefully we've done a better job of hiding him this month. He could be in a screenshot, on a piece of hardware or anywhere, really. Find him and send an e-mail to ed@nag.co.za with the subject line [June Badger]. We'll announce a random winner next month and that person will win a T-shirt and lanyard from RudRa Clothing.

LAST MONTH'S WINNER
Waldorf Van Den Berg, p63

FOR PS3 AND XBOX 360
COMING JUNE '08

GOLD EDITION ALSO AVAILABLE

FROM **R518.36**

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PC | Wii | PS3 | XBOX 360

Miktar's Meanderings



by Miktar Dracon

So it goes

"It's easy to blame or praise one person, but the truth is that it takes a village."

I'M SITTING IN MY living room in my nice little apartment I got myself after having moved to Johannesburg a few years back in the hope that NAG would hire me. Originally, I had lived with James until I got on my feet. Were it not for his good graces, I never would have the opportunity to work at NAG. Kudos to you, James. On the carpet I got gratis from our art director and master *TrackMania Nations* level designer (bless his heart), since he also recently moved into a nearby area, lay my entire collection of NAG magazines spread out into piles representing years. I'm surprised at the number of piles: six. Many would feel that this number seems low. I'm constantly reminded – practically daily – of the people who have read NAG for many years. They are very passionate people. In many ways, I envy those people for having noticed such a good thing before I had. Either way, there are many changes happening.

Originally, I intended not to say anything, to just let things happen and hope nobody notices the changes. However, a few good friends convinced me otherwise. At the end of June, I will be moving to the United States for an indeterminate number of years. The future was never a certain thing for me, and that hasn't changed. That doesn't mean that I won't be working for NAG anymore. This will come as a disappointment for those who seem to be waiting for the day I leave NAG. To be blunt, I've spent too many years investing in this great magazine to just let that time go to waste. Plus, I love this job. It is a testament to the people I work with who supported me in this decision. To me, it speaks highly of Michael, who has supported me on this from the start. I would not be able to make this transition in my life, were it not for him and his firm grasp of exactly who and what I am, and what to do with me.

The plan is to live in the United States, but to continue writing previews, reviews and features for NAG as I have been doing for so long. I doubt that I can do anything else. My reasons for relocating to work from elsewhere is a hard-won choice to take a one-in-a-million shot at something, or for the rest of my life say I decided to pass when opportunity knocked.

This means that I will no longer be in charge of authoring the DVD, a task I have come to enjoy wholeheartedly, and I hope it

has served those who buy the magazine for the DVD well. It's a big responsibility and the smallest mistake can really bite you in the ass, but it's one I'm reluctant to hand over.

Authoring the DVD for so many years was a blast, and I'm sorry I can't do it anymore. If this is catharsis in motion, I'm fine with it.

Beyond that, there are other changes because of me no longer being in the office physically. To be honest, the true extent of my sudden upheaval is something I doubt I would even want to fully comprehend. I'm leaving behind a big mess, I feel. Things to be done, tasks to complete, future projects... stuff like that.

So, those magazines are in neat piles on my carpet, because I'm shuffling and re-shuffling bags, trying to find a way to take them all with me when I go. It's funny to admit: I'm selling/giving away everything I own, consoles (goodbye my babies), car, TV, fridge (just got the damn thing too), washer/dryer (finally paid off), games, movies and furniture. A lot of creature comforts and trappings, sure, but I liked all that stuff. My consoles are a sore point. I've been collecting them for as long as I could hold an after-school job to pay for such expensive hobbies. In truth, I'm glad I never gave up on gaming. Back then, so many people thought it such a waste of time, but I know the truth.

Gaming keeps many people, me included, sane. It is a gift.

All that, and I'm trying to find a way to take God knows how many kilograms of glossy paper with me, because I can't give it up. It may sound terrible, but I know my mate's mom, whose funeral we'll be attending in the United States a few days after I write this column, would have wanted it this way. I can practically hear her stern and lecturing voice say, "We're paying how much for the plane ticket? You'd be stupid not to bring them over early and store them here with a friend so you can fetch them later when you move in June."

She was a fine woman with a stern work ethic and an incredible drive to get things done. She lost her battle with "cancer of the everything," to borrow from Vonnegut once more. This column is for her and the friends who have supported me during these days.

Godspeed, Barbara Hudon. Give 'em hell. **NAG**

“

I'm constantly reminded
– practically daily
– of the people
who have read
NAG for many
years. They are
very passionate
people.

Bright Launch of GeForce® 9800GX2-1024 Graphics Cards

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by Megan Hughes

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by Walt Pretorius

What we already know

I F YOU TAKE A drive past the northwest of Johannesburg, heading towards Lanseria and eventually Hartbeespoort and Brits, you will undoubtedly be driving on the R512. Once the road is free of the last industrial areas, it's actually quite pretty, with typical Highveld grasslands on all sides. Just before you cross over the N14 highway, which runs from Krugersdorp to Pretoria, you will come across an informal venue that every traveller should visit. Nestled among some acacia trees is Pete's¹ Boerewors Rolls, a roadside pit stop that serves the finest boerewors rolls this side of Bloemfontein. It's not a fancy place, just a braai and a table and a few threadbare camping chairs under those trees. However, the food is fantastic, juicy and very tasty. Driving past is a sin, but if the wind blows in the right direction, the wafting scent makes driving past almost impossible. On any given day, a number of vehicles, from motorcycles to fancy cars, are parked at the side of the road as their owners relish this truly enjoyable and uniquely South African treat.

What does this have to do with gaming? [I was wondering that myself, Ed.] Not much, except that it illustrates a point. See, Pete's Boerewors Rolls serves great food, not relying on fancy frills to entice customers. Rather, the reputation of this small 'establishment' precedes it, based entirely on the quality of the food served there.

No frills. It's a nice idea, and one that gamers who have been around for a long time can appreciate. Sure, it's great to have awesome graphics and brilliant sound, but, in the end, it's the game dynamic that counts. The games that many of us first started on were reliant on this, because graphics was often just rough versions of the things they represented. A few brightly coloured blocks could be a space ship or a brave adventurer, and a circle with a wedge removed could become an icon. Those were the days when the way the game played meant everything. I would love to see a

return to them.

See, these days graphics is paramount, it seems. Very few people ask, "Is it a good game" before they ask if the graphics is good. Nevertheless, graphics, when you get right down to basics, is frills. It's the window dressing with which the game dynamic is presented. So are sound effects.

Don't get me wrong... I love a game with good graphics. I might be argumentative and difficult, but I am not stupid. Good graphics makes a game more enjoyable, just as a nice sauce sprayed all over one of those boerewors rolls enhances the flavour of the snack. However, when you take the sauce away, does it still taste good?

There have been a few instances of late, particularly after the release of the next-generation consoles, in which games have looked fantastic but played terribly. I would list examples, but more than a few people would probably get upset if I did. However, the trend seems to be increasing. More and more titles that are short, dodgy to play and plain annoying are being released behind the shiny veneer of advanced physics and lighting. They look really impressive but, when experienced, leave a lot to be desired.

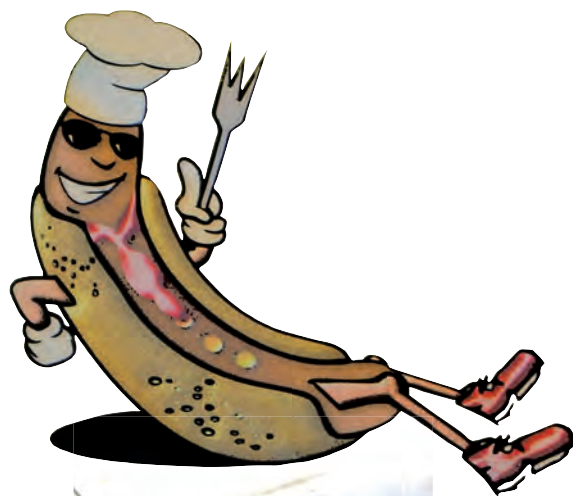
It's a tough market though, and one that requires fast work to take advantage of. Sometimes, though, I wish game developers would take a step back and just think about ways to recapture the feeling of older games, the unique dynamics that made them addictive despite the fact that they looked awful. I am not saying drop the high-end graphics. High-end graphics is here to stay. Every now and then, they should perhaps reconsider how a game plays, or even try to create a game that is new and unique (rather than just another first-person shooter). Perhaps it is time for the frills to take a back seat.

It's just a thought. Thinking makes me hungry. I think it's time for a trip up the R512.

¹ Ramjet is not related to Pete.



No frills. It's a nice idea, and one that gamers who have been around for a long time can appreciate.



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MASTERS OF HORROR

You're alone in a creepy room. Something is trying to get in through the trapdoor in the floor and all you have in the room to block the unknown horror's advance is a child's rocking horse. It's all about sphincter-loosening terror at seeing your worst sadomasochistic nightmare come walking down the hall towards you, dragging a giant machete and there is nowhere to hide. It's all about being trained to handle the zombie-infested nightmare you find yourself in, but you just know things are really far worse than you think. And you're almost out of ammo.

No matter which way you slice it, the Horror genre has always managed to provide some real thrills, scares or even nightmares - if you happen to have a weak occult constitution.

The original *Alone in the Dark* series had a kick to it, providing terror in the form of dead-normal situations suddenly going all creepy on you, and the next thing you knew, you're running for your life. It played on the terror of what's hiding in the closet, under the stairs or right next door. The occult monsters, hell-bent on taking out your pasty white ass, were always just one room away, and it remained an easy terror button to press.

Silent Hill made a name for itself as a series by putting things in the room with you that you couldn't fight. Things that wanted to kill you. Would kill you. You ran... immediately. The game wasn't going to tell you to run, fool. You're supposed to be running. Somehow, the series just got that right and it pretty much emasculated you. Then the personalised nightmares began. It's very Japanese, creepy Japanese, playing on the terror of nameless faces in the fog. And people sewn into their own skin.

Sure, you're a trained professional in *Resident Evil*, but zombie dogs? Seriously, you emptied a whole clip and the thing just

kept coming. Tarantulas. Giant, mutant, zombie tarantulas. They don't train you to handle giant, mutant, zombie tarantulas. Zombies are easy; you shoot them in the head. Eat some green herbs. Talk to a dude about buying a gun. The terror wasn't the zombies; you could kill them - if you had a truck full of ammo. But you didn't. The terror was in man versus everything else, and the health-replenishing items were far and few between.

All three series have become seminal cornerstones of the Survival Horror genre, and for good reasons. It is a surprise to see *Alone in the Dark* resurrected from the dead, though. Necromancy for fun and profit. Another *Silent Hill* is never a bad thing, and the next one seems to return to what made the second title in the series so good. After the success of *Resident Evil 4* turning the series' formula into something a bit more action packed, the next *Resident Evil* now stands atop a pile of corpses, holding a chainsaw and saying, "It's good to be King".

Let us pull open the stitches, peer inside the grotesque, creepy, zombie-infested crevasse, and see what these three Survival Horror kings have to offer thrill seekers, nightmare addicts and weirdos...





ALONE IN THE DARK

Developer→ Eden Games (PC | Xbox 360 | PS3) | Hydravision Entertainment (PS2, Wii)

Publisher→ Atari

Genre→ Survival Horror | Action Adventure

Release Date→ June 2008

Platforms→ PC | 360 | Wii | PS2

UR LEGEND: CENTRAL PARK

It's like a combination of what makes an episode of *Lost* or *Prison Break* so addictive, combined with being trapped in a massive *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired park alone at night, and being able to set traps / *Am Legend*-style by using a knife on a car's petrol tank. Using that same lighter you just used to make a car time bomb, you can also get funky with the health spray. A health-spray aerosol can give you choices previously unconsidered: you can heal yourself, of course, or combine it with a lighter to make a flamethrower. And we're all about the flames. You can throw that health-spray can at an enemy and shoot it on impact to send the creature back to hell. You can wrap it in sticky tape and attach it to a rat, watch the little furry suicide gerbil run back to his pack to chomp on a dead guy, and then pop that health-spray can with a well-placed shot to send his whole demonic tribe back to the abyss.

It's ambitious, but somehow the new *Alone in the Dark* actually manages to combine these grand ideas into something quite unlike the series. In fact, it's breaking out of its original genre quite a bit into what may well be uncharted territory.

EVOLUTION OF SURVIVAL

"We've actually looked outside of the Survival Horror genre for our inspirations with this game. We wanted to create a broader experience that wasn't appealing only to horror fans, and we've taken a much more action-adventure orientated approach," stated

Nour Polloni, Producer at Eden Games.

It seems that the first *Die Hard* movie was an inspiration for how the new *Alone in the Dark* should approach being alone in the dark up fecal creek without a paddle. The crux of it: the game should allow the player to utilise Bruce Willis-style determination to survive against overwhelming odds, using only the creepy, New York Central Park environment and assorted litter found strewn across the massive park area.

And it is quite massive. We had the chance to play a recent build and the *Grand Theft Auto* feel is immediate the moment you start driving around the park using a golf cart. But where it gets exciting is when you're driving down a foggy road in a 'borrowed' taxi trying to reach your objective, when a monster leaps onto the hood of the cart and starts trying to rip the roof off to get to you. Keeping in line with the developer's goals of "keeping it real," your choices are to hit the brakes and bail, check the glove compartment, hoot, switch off the lights, shoot the damn thing, move to the passenger seat, move to the back seat and then out the back door and panic. We panicked, but that's why game rocks. Not admitting to ourselves that we just got the crap scared out of us, we reloaded from the last checkpoint and proceeded to check out the inventory.

And then a damn monster sidled up to us while we're eyeballing lead protagonist Carnby's coat pockets, since the game doesn't pause when you're deciding what to retaliate with.

BULGARIAN BEAUTY

With an amazing reactive score written by Oliver Deriviere, *Alone in the Dark* contains some truly provocative and stunning medleys. The award-winning Bulgarian Choir, The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices, was recorded singing in their native tongue about Carnby and what's happening in Central Park. If you've checked out the trailers on the cover DVD, you'll remember the theme as it plays throughout most of the trailers.

"Playing one episode of *Alone* is like watching one episode of 24 in that it can be enjoyed on its own or as part of the whole game. And if you've got limited time to spare, you can make a choice between watching an hour of a DVD or an hour of playing *Alone*, knowing you'll get a full experience from it." (Nour Polloni, Eden Games)



CARNBY IN THE DARK

Yes, it's the same Carnby from the original series. No, you don't need to know who he is to enjoy the new *Alone in the Dark*. All will be revealed, because according to Nour Polloni, "The reason behind Carnby's sudden appearance in 2008 and not having aged a day is central to the story, and we're really not going to give away any more than that right now. Sorry!"

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"In some parts, you'll be corridor-crawling in nervous anticipation of what's round the next corner, hoping your torch batteries don't run out and that you've got what you need in your jacket to deal with whatever comes at you. In other sequences, you'll be desperately trying to hang on with a 200ft drop beneath you and debris raining down. Both are tense and frightening situations but achieved in different ways." (Nour Polloni, Eden Games)



KEEPING IT REAL

"We wanted to create a game where the player is immersed in the action to the point where he never actually has to leave the game world, and that includes avoiding menu screens, which take the player out of the action. Having the inventory in real time in the jacket also adds another dimension of pressure - you can't just use the inventory like a pause button and you have to act fast if something's coming at you," said Polloni.

To help speed things along, two useful features immediately jump out: a quick-draw button lets you take out and put away the last item you used, and you can also quickly scroll through different items in your inventory without opening your jacket. The real winner is the quick-select system: you can assign your favourite combination of items to a single button press. Nice.

And there are many items to combine, as you may have guessed by now.

Thankfully, Carnby has two hands, and by putting things in his left and right hands respectively, you can combine the items into a useful (or awkwardly not useful for that particular moment in time) combination. You can hold your flashlight with your gun, which is naturally a fine idea when something in the darkness is waiting to eat you. You can light a Molotov cocktail, which is just a rag in a bottle of alcohol (something you made earlier while huddling behind a building, hiding from roaming monsters). Or you can just set things on fire in general, which is actually a core mechanic of the game it seems. Everything you think is flammable is flammable.

BURN BABY BURN

"It wouldn't be *Alone in the Dark* if you didn't have to find a way to light your path through dark places. Of course, there's a flashlight, but we've played a lot with other light sources such as glow sticks, and especially

fire. Fire became a very important element for us early in the design process to bring something really new and fun to the gameplay, and we spent a year getting it to look right and to realistically emulate propagation across flammable objects and surfaces," said Polloni.

Being stuck in a hallway that's on fire while you bash down a door using a fire extinguisher you found earlier in an office is indeed a very bad place to be, thanks to how the fire reacts. Interestingly enough, attacking with weapons (which include chairs, wooden beams, crowbars or trashcans) is an involved affair, requiring you to move the right analogue stick forwards and backwards or side to side, depending on the situation and what you want to do.

To keep the action intense, the game employs the same literary mechanics used in popular shows such as *Lost*, *24*, *Prison Break*, etc. The tight action dynamic, plot twists, cliffhangers and character revelation are being recreated in the game through a DVD-style chapter system, which breaks the game down into eight episodes. According to Polloni, "We wanted the players to have the same kind of experience [as with the shows] in *Alone in the Dark*, so we've used that structure to give us the same kind of narrative dynamic, intertwined with the gameplay."

Events in the game really have a way of putting you under a lot of pressure. Even when you're running around alone in the park, there are some genuinely eerie locations to explore. Central Park is practically a city within itself, since it has a museum, ice rinks, castle, boating lake, police precinct and even a zoo, which may or may not contain untold horror. We're not telling.

All that, you, a few things in your pockets and hopefully a lot of luck. Bring it on.



RESIDENT EVIL 5

Developer→Capcom
Publisher→Capcom
Genre→Survival Horror
Release Date→TBA
Platforms→PS3 | 360

RESIDENT EVIL 5

Resident Evil 5 is set ten years after the Raccoon City incident and the accompanying events portrayed in the original *Resident Evil*, and features gaming similar to the critically acclaimed *Resident Evil 4*.

Yeah okay, so we don't actually know very much about *Resident Evil 5* yet. Nobody does. Nevertheless, how could NAG publish a horror-themed edition without printing some lurid glossies snapped from the game's controversial trailer? This text stuff is just the academic fluff used to maintain the illusion that we're a respectable magazine or something. OMG! Just look at those zombies!

RESIDENT HERO

First appearing as one of the two lead protagonists in *Resident Evil* (1996) and later appearing as the thorn in Umbrella Corporation's side in *Code: Veronica* (2000) and *Umbrella Chronicles* (2007), former Special Tactics and Rescue Service agent, Chris Redfield, is back in the hot seat in *Resident Evil 5*. Now employed by a corporation identified only as the BSAA (a bag of cream soda lollies says the "B" stands for "Biological," "Biohazard" or "Bio-something else") and sporting a somewhat more fashionable hairstyle and butch physique, Redfield has been deployed to investigate some sort of disturbance in Africa that probably has something to do with, oh, maybe a viral outbreak? You read it in NAG first.

"What has happened to Chris during these ten years?" asks producer Jun Takeuchi. "By showing his past, we can begin to unravel things that were not resolved in *Resident Evil 4*." Like, seriously, how was that creepy merchant guy able to move around unmolested, while senior Kennedy had to shoot his way through

hordes of psychopathic peasants and a bunch of trolls?

A mysterious lady returning from a previous episode remains intriguingly mysterious for now, but here's hoping it isn't that insufferable brat Ashley, who really should have died – preferably very painfully – in *Resident Evil 4*.

CONTROVERSIAL EVIL

Over the last 12 years or so, we've gunned down zombies (or reasonable facsimiles thereof) in America, Europe and even Antarctica, on a sort of informal 'Resident Evil: Zombie World Tour'. However, when Capcom trotted out a teaser trailer for *Resident Evil 5*, depicting zombies in an all-new African environment, a sudden eruption of moral outrage shook the very foundations of the gaming industry.

The epicentre was *Newsweek* games journalist, N'gai Croal, who fumed in an interview with MTV that, "I looked at the *Resident Evil 5* trailer and I was like, 'Wow, clearly no one black worked on this game.' Because I wonder, and I haven't sort of really dug into it that much, but I wonder what sort of advice Capcom gave them. The point isn't that you can't have black zombies. There was a lot of imagery in that trailer that dovetailed with classic racist imagery. What was not funny, but somewhat interesting, was that there were so many gamers who couldn't see it at all. Like, literally couldn't see it."

In a recent interview with Japanese magazine *Famitsu*, Takeuchi remained blithely unconcerned about the accusations of racism. "We settled on the fact that we really wanted to show the origins of the virus," Takeuchi said. "So for the setting, we thought, 'How about using the place where humankind was born?'"



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SILENT HILL: HOMECOMING

Developer→ The Collective
Publisher→ Konami
Genre→ Survival Horror
Release Date→ September 2008
Platforms→ PS3 | 360

I LOVE THE WHITE STUFF

Up until now, *Silent Hill* has been known for a few distinct things: utterly useless manic-depressive lead characters who couldn't will-power themselves out of a plastic bag filled with blood and internal organs, the terror-inducing pyramid head and his big machete, and fog... lots of fog.

The pristine, white, very-close fog of *Silent Hill* could practically be considered a lead character in the series, and it's good to see it making a return in *Silent Hill: Homecoming*. To briefly recap: *Silent Hill* involved going to a town covered in fog to find your kid, while avoiding the odd creatures jerking around the desolate haven for errant clouds of suspended water particles. And to meet the friendly, quasi-imaginary locals who were each trapped in their own personal hell. *Silent Hill 2* was pretty much the same thing but grittier: more fog and certainly much scarier than the first one. In certain gaming circles, it is considered a geek rite of passage to have braved *Silent Hill 2* and gotten scared.

Silent Hill 3 placed more emphasis on the freaky stuff, and less emphasis on *Silent Hill* (the town). Almost no white fog whatsoever. It was good, creepy and scary, a departure that may or may not have succeeded. *Silent Hill 4: The Room* was set in an apartment, which was genuinely scary. A hole in the bathroom wall would take you to the town of *Silent Hill*, but in a detached way. The Room was an interesting variation, especially how *Silent Hill* would flow out into the 'real world'. Genuine scares were marred only by slightly obvious formulaic conventions.

We know very little about *Silent Hill: Homecoming*, other than the plot and how the developer plans to turn the series inside out.

ANOTHER FLOCKING SHEPARD

You are Alex Shepard. You are a war veteran who 'returns home from an overseas tour of duty to find that his father, and later his younger brother Joshua, have disappeared, and his mother has gone into catatonia'. Alex searches for his brother, which leads him to the town of *Silent Hill*.

Alex will not only explore the real-world, fog-covered areas of *Silent Hill*, but also the 'Otherworld' version of the same maps. This ties into the *Silent Hill* movie, because it implements something previously not seen in the series. If you missed the movie, there are two *Silent Hills*, perfectly overlapped but with poignant differences. The real-world

version is creepy and filled with evil, white *Silent Hill 2*-style fog. The 'Otherworld' version is dark, evil, gritty, bloody and definitely not a good place to be in. In the movie, the transition from one to the other was a spectacular visual effect, with the one world dissolving while the other grew out of the darkness. It's unclear how the game will represent the swap from one world to the other, or even if it will be something that happens automatically or on command. We assume it'll be a scripted event.

The game taking inspiration from the movie is interesting, but the real change in *Silent Hill: Homecoming* is that Alex Shepard isn't a wimp. He's trained, has guns and he has the moves. In fact, the game will feature a real-time wound system for both Alex and his enemies. Grappling and evasive manoeuvres give Alex the biggest advantage ever seen in a *Silent Hill* protagonist, which really breaks the mould quite diligently. It's like giving Pac-Man a Proton Pack, really. Series puritans may not appreciate suddenly being expected to do more than just running away, but perhaps the more action-orientated approach is a sign of the times for the Survival Horror genre.

Real-time physics will also come into play: the game's developer promises "new ways to attack and avoid enemies." If a player bumps into something it will jostle, which may alert enemies of your presence. There is an upgraded artificial intelligence for the enemies, and rumours of a return to the multiple-endings tradition of *Silent Hill*. Previously, acts of kindness, aggression and other interactions with the denizens in *Silent Hill* would lead to different endings, including spoof endings (*Silent Hill 2* remains the series champion for the best-hidden ending).

The fifth instalment in the series will be developed by the Foundation 9 studio, The Collective, who previously worked on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: The Fallen*, *Marc Ecko's Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Dirty Harry*.

SUNNY SILENT HILL

According to Akira Yamaoka, composer/producer of the music for *Silent Hill: Homecoming*, in an interview with *Famitsu* magazine, the team's interest in a sunny atmosphere for the next *Silent Hill* didn't go down so well, and that *Silent Hill: Homecoming* is a return to the psychological roots of *Silent Hill 2*. **NAG**





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MONS OF GAMING

BAD GUYS JUST WANNA EVISCERATE AND HAVE FUN

THE BLACK PARADE

THE CYBERDEMON

You're doomed when you encounter The Cyberdemon. The Cyberdemon isn't some half-pint minion that parts before your machinegun like wheat before the plough. The Cyberdemon has taken the lives of more Space Marines than we can count, so you don't want to go into battle with one without a plan. For that, you'll have to talk to Tactics and Monster Encounter Logistics. We don't cover actual field operations of that nature after what happened to RedTide during the Third Doom wars.

Scariness: It took some counselling, but thanks to the diligent psychic doctors we have here at NAGGIN, we've managed to gain actual first-hand accounts of soldiers going up against The Cyberdemon. Most emphasised the metallic, mechanised hooves that join the skin halfway up the upper leg, right below the two rocket-launchers pointed right at you. And by then most had either run away or had been killed. Intel reports that The Cyberdemon is roughly twice the size of a man and has giant horns on its head and a bovine-like snout. The Cyberdemon seems to be weak against a few hundred rockets and a BFG-9000 shot or two if you have them.

Difficulty to kill: Somehow, that metal plate on its crotch is like a damn force field! It's as if someone took a minotaur and combined

it with The Terminator, making sure to weld a rocket launcher to one of its arms. We simply cannot imagine what kind of maniac would even consider using such a creature!

Hell truly is a terrible place. On some days, we even admit to ourselves that The Cyberdemon is our favourite, but we really do love all monsters equally.



CYBERDEMON

Shoot it until it dies.

FIEND

It just wouldn't be the same without them: the villains, the henchmen, the demonic spawn from the gates of Hell, the spiders, the rats, the orcs and the bats. Let's not forget the end-of-level bosses, the tough guys to beat and especially not the 'why-won't-you-die-you-son-of-a'. Especially not the last one. Without the enemies and the villains, where would we gamers be? Could you imagine reaching the end of World 1-4 only to hit a switch and be told to go to the next castle? Try to imagine finding yourself in a room full of ammunition, health, mega-health and enough rockets to blow up the sun, only to find the courtyard past the door completely devoid of anything to try to punch in the crotch and run away from! That's right, you've just realised what we at NAG Gestalt Industries Networked have realised: without the bad guys there would be no good guys! Therefore, in the interest of 'Public Awareness Towards Monsters Who Bring Us Glee', here is your personal guide to 'Monster Appreciation' and how to kill them in case they're trying to kill you. And remember, don't tap on the glass. They hate that.

FIEND

"In every dark corner, around every turn, that's where a Fiend could be waiting for you." If you think like this, you have most likely already encountered one and they aren't easy to forget. Two spikes protrude from its skull, looking every bit the Hound of Hell, and it has giant claws instead of front legs. It can tear you in half or drop your

health down to damn near half from just one hit that you didn't see coming. Somehow, the damn things always seem just a bit smarter than they really are, situated exactly where you least expect them.

Scariness: This thing is your worst nightmare and if not, then you've just not seen one for yourself yet. Remember, this

is for PATMWUG, so you should really do yourself a favour. Hop through a slip gate to *Quake* and check one out in action.

Difficulty to kill: No matter where you go, a Fiend always seems to be in healthy condition with a wet nose, wagging tail and giant claws that can kill you. They are known to leap ten, sometimes twenty metres right at you, depending on the crosswind. If you're gonna take one down, you can always trust your shotgun if you're fancy with the feet, but if you have trouble making the strafe, you should try to get the Lightning Gun ASAP. It's behind the secret door on that one level.



FIEND
You're screwed. Admit it.

LITTLE GIRL

There is an undeniable law, which has recently become public knowledge and is often exploited just to make money. We blame Frank in Accounting for that. We let it slip that James was onto something with his 'Little Girls Are Scary' research (he was using Alma Wade as a test subject for his doctoral thesis), and Frank, the damn fool, went and wrote a script for a horror movie involving a little girl with long hair who kills people with VHS cassettes. Frank's funeral was beautiful, and it's odd how he had a heart attack right after getting rich from the movie.

Scariness: If the heart attack you get from the 'Little Girls Are Scary' syndrome doesn't kill you, then the strange pyrotechnical abilities the Little Girls possess certainly



LITTLE GIRLS

Able to make you bleed from uncomfortable places.

will. It seems that they can set the walls on fire, the air on fire, you on fire. They can also make you see things and using only the power of their minds, they'll take your head and spin it so fast you won't have time to hear your neck snap.

Difficulty to kill: They can stop bullets, toy with your mind and make a swing creak ominously. Your best bet is to have an odd natural affinity for slowing your perception of time until you literally seem superhuman to everyone around you. But what're the chances? Unless you're in a game or something, you're pretty screwed. Hard not to appreciate that, huh?

THE BUTCHER

He's a massive bloke with a bloody meat cleaver, a bad temper, an interesting taste in interior decorating, and it turns out that he's a bit territorial too. Anyone who looks at you and growls, "Mmmm, fresh meat" should be filed under 'Please Avoid'. If only Jeffrey Dahmer's 'special friends' had played Diablo first. And they say videogames have no educational value.

Scariness: Gore-splattered apron, industrial-sized meat cleaver, murderous glint in the eye. We have a scary monster here.

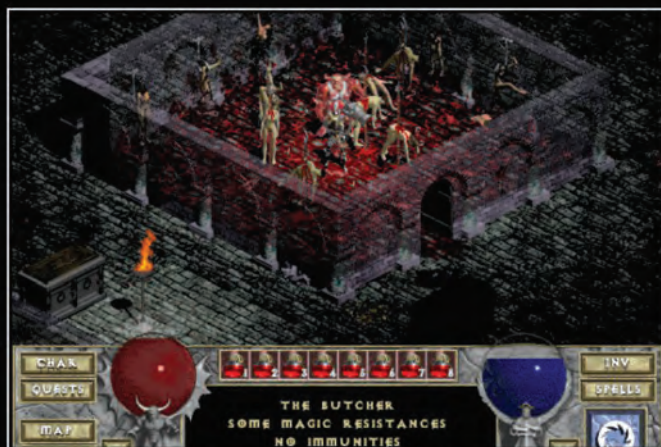
Difficulty to kill: Years of feeding on his signature 'Dungeon Adventurer Sausage™' has bequeathed this bloated abomination with a protective layer of subcutaneous fat that's as durable and resilient as the finest Dwarven Mithral. And he's pretty fast on the trotters for a fatty. Try throwing dead babies at him or something, because that rusty sword with damage 2-10 won't do much.

BOWSER

Also known as King Koopa in other academic circles, Bowser seems to only appear when there is Mario activity in that particular reality. Where there is a Mario, there is a Bowser. Except when the Mario is farthest away from the Miyamoto scientist who works down the hall (we hear the guy was the first to actually discover the Mario) then weird stuff happens. The exact nature of the attraction between the Mario and Miyamoto remains undetermined, but we hear Section-9 put some guys on it.

Scariness: Well, not that scary at all - just kind of a big, lizard-turtle thing with spikes on its shell. Wait, is that fire? FIRE! Okay, you're not so bad, Bowser. I'll just jump on the axe thing behind you. Oh, it's a switch. I wanted an axe. Wait, another castle. Fast forward to World 2-4. Oh look, it's Bowser again. Or is it a different Bowser? Whatever, I bet there's gonna be one at the end of every damn world. Games need more blood.

Difficulty to kill: Don't try to jump over Bowser. You'll just land on the damn spikes on his shell. We tried, and lost RamJet that way. Instead, run under the big idiot when he's busy jumping up into the air to try to beat you with an airborne fireball. He thinks he's so smart. **NAG**



THE BUTCHER

You = Fresh Meat.



BOWSER

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LOOKING BACK IN TERROR

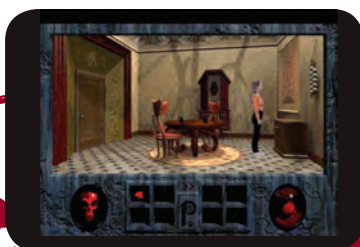
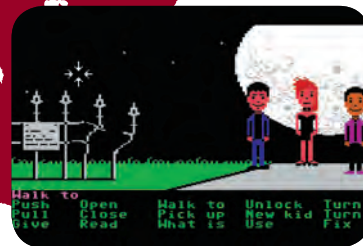
Not even the Looking Back feature has eluded those monsters in the cupboard this month. The wretched thing was seized and chopped up into chunky bits! This is what bled out, in super slow motion, across the *NAG* office floor.

MANIAC MANSION (1987)

The first of LucasArts' SCUMM (Script Utility for *Maniac Mansion*) adventure games, *Maniac Mansion*, was a B-movie parody that saw a motley trio of college misfits launch an impromptu rescue mission when Dave Miller's blonde squeeze, Sandy Pantz, was abducted by Dr Fred Edison, the local eccentric. *Maniac Mansion* was a crumbling, secluded fortress that the bumbling teens had to breach before the mad doc stuffed the dizzy cheerleader into his Zom-B-Matic machine and knocked her GPA down half a point. Along the way, the kids had to negotiate their way past the sexually deviant and decidedly repellent Nurse Edna, her mummified cousin Ted, a pair of sentient tentacles and Edison's son, Weird Ed, a survivalist paramilitary commando with pituitary gigantism and a beloved pet hamster.

The game was notorious for a number of red herrings – most notably a chainsaw for which, to players' immense frustration, there was no fuel. In the second SCUMM adventure, *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, players could pick up fuel marked "for chainsaws only," but there was no chainsaw.

In *Day of the Tentacle*, the 1993 sequel, you could play *Maniac Mansion* in its entirety on the computer in Weird Ed's bedroom.



PHANTASMAGORIA (1995)

With a story cribbed from Stephen King's entire back catalogue and spanning a then-unprecedented seven CDs, Sierra's *Phantasmagoria* was one of the first (and last) games to use a live actor as the playable character – paperback novelist, Adrienne "Aaaaaadrieeeeenne" Delaney. The game was filmed on blue screen over several months, with a cast and crew of some 200 people.

Shortly after moving into the rambling mansion formerly inhabited by Victorian stage magician, Zoltan Carnovasch, Adrienne and her husband Don started having some marital issues. To further complicate matters, she was experiencing alarming hallucinations starring the house's late occupant, his luckless wives and his interesting hobby (murder). Meanwhile, Don had been possessed by a demon. It was like a prime-time sitcom in Hell. Everything only got worse, before an abrupt conclusion on the business end of an enormous suspended axe.

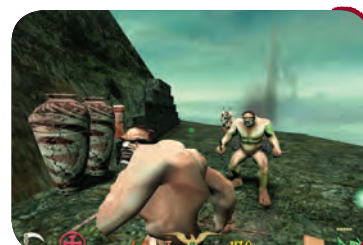
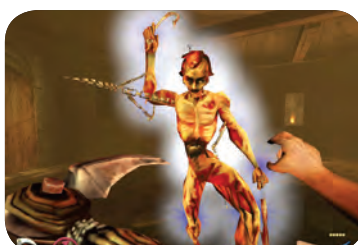
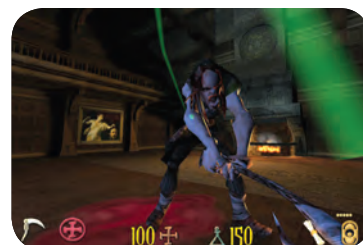
Featuring explicit violence, a rape scene and a controversial sequence where a woman was force-fed bloody guts until she suffocated, Roberta Williams' latest game was a significant departure from the fantasy, fluff family-friendly fare of *King's Quest* and *Mixed Up Mother Goose*. It was promptly banned in Australia, and several major retailers in America refused to stock it.

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING (2001)

This Unreal Engine-powered FPS followed the misadventures of World War I veteran, turned paranormal investigator, Patrick Galloway, on a visit to his army buddy Jeremiah Covenant's estate on the Irish coast. In failing health, Covenant revealed a bizarre story of childhood folly and a family curse to his friend, and begged him to set things right. Patty foolishly agreed, unwittingly pledging himself to do mortal combat with Jerry's undead and disgruntled siblings, the pagan sorcerer Count Otto Keisinger and ultimately some sort of massively evil entity, dubbed the Undying King, which wanted to eat the world or something.

Despite garnering considerable critical acclaim and a very respectable average of 85 on Metacritic, sales were so poor that plans for a multiplayer patch were abandoned, a scheduled PS2 port was cancelled and Gamespot awarded *Undying* "Best game that no one played."

Despite widespread claims to the contrary, Clive Barker is not a game developer. He's an author and film director. *Hellraiser*, *Nightbreed*, *The Great and Secret Show*... yeah, those are his. In addition to penning the story behind *Undying*, Barker also provided the voice of Jeremiah's wayward brother, Ambrose. **NAG**



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previews

WHAT WE WANT



GEARS OF WAR 2 [360]

We can't tell you how excited we are about *Gears of War 2*, or we might be accused of being console fanboys by the PC fanboys. We're not going to say how frakking sweet the trailer is. We're not going to say how awesome chainsaw duelling looks. We're not going to say anything about how cool the hundreds of Locusts running between the legs of the big, giant, walking Brumak is. It's not that cool. Really. We're not that excited.

PUZZLE QUEST: GALACTRIX [MULTI]

Can I haz moar *Puzzle Quest* plz? The first *Puzzle Quest* combined RPG elements with Match-3 simplicity for a really interesting and refreshing experience. The next one drops the fantasy setting and moves it to space! With space ships, you can upgrade! We like to sit in the corner of the office with a Nintendo DS and pretend to play the game, and it's all like "shwing, shwing, KABOOM, pew, pew, pew, laaaaaaaaser, MISSILES!" It's awesome.

TRACKMANIA SPEED RACER EDITION [PC]

TrackMania is already halfway there. It just needs the cool, future retro-styling of the movie and a whole lot of gadgets you can activate on your car so you can 'car-fu' your way past opponents. Throw in some more loop-de-loops, a rocking sound track and ample voice samples, and you have yourself a game! We'd totally buy it.

DUNGEON SIEGE 3 [PC]

We're not sure why, but *Dungeon Siege 2* didn't really do it for us. We think it was all the dialogue and errand-boy quests. The first *Dungeon Siege* had the right idea: a long, congruous, continuous hack-and-slash adventure that never loaded and totally mind-controlled you with that catchy theme tune. But *Dungeon Siege 2*, nothing. Didn't feel a thing. Don't just leave it there developers! Bring back the glory and a sweet techno-remix of that tune.

BURNOUT CARMAGEDDON AUDIOSURF MANIA [IN OUR DREAMS]

Take *Burnout*, make it more like *Carmageddon* so you can drive over people, but then have the track you race on be generated based on the MP3 you're listening to. We have tons of wonderful ideas such as this, so if you're a game developer looking for a game to design, mail us at gameideasthattotallyrock@nagmagazine.co.za.



NINJA GAIDEN II

Developer→ Team Ninja | Publisher→ Microsoft Game Studios | Genre→ Action | Release Date→ 6 June

WE GOT SOME *Ninja Gaiden II* preview code right as the magazine was going out the door, so we hijacked the truck and inserted this preview in between the pages hoping nobody would notice. The good news is that the game still looks every bit as slick as it did at the Team Ninja studios in Tokyo, which we visited a few months back. However, now it has lots more blood and even little splotchy bits of flesh that rain down after Ryu has gone all blender on a group of enemies. It's definitely the adrenal-fuelled Ninja-escapades game designer Itagaki promised us. All it needs now is a little nip and tuck around the edges as the preview code highlighted a few areas that are still unfinished, but the overall impression is that *Ninja Gaiden II* will go where the first game couldn't even imagine. The tutorial bits

that pop up as you play help you understand why you're getting your ninja butt handed to you, and pretty soon even we were killing bad guys with the kind of flair that people would pay money to see. More than a few staff members commented on how slick the visuals are, especially the city backdrops of the first level, but the real star of the show is the smooth, fast animations of Ryu and his incredible slice-and-dice ninja powers. It's uncanny to watch enemies lose arms, legs and heads with the same effortless glee usually reserved for hot metal 'slicing' through butter. That aside, we've not had the chance to check out the Ninja Theatre mode, which lets you record particularly spectacular fights for playback later. **NAG**

Miktar "Master Ninja, it told me so" Dracon

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GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME

"IF THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE in your neighbourhood, who ya gonna call? Ghostbusters."

After nearly two decades, and a bit of confusion about licenses and developers, *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* will give anyone who has ever dreamed of the Ecto-1 and Proton Packs the chance to step into khaki uniforms and black boots and join the legendary ghost-busting team. The cast from the original film, including Bill Murray and Ernie Hudson as well as Arnie Potts and William Atherton, will do the voice-overs. Unfortunately, Sigourney Weaver and Rick Moranis have decided not to get involved in the game.

Set two years after the events of the second film, the Ghostbusters team has officially been endorsed by the city council. With an ever-increasing workload and their rising popularity, the team is in need of an extra pair of hands. And this is where you come in. Playing as the unnamed rookie, you are essentially expendable to the team. What this means is that you are given all of the latest (and, of course, untested) equipment and weapons to try out before any of the other team members to ensure safety.

Shortly after your recruitment and initiation into the team, the gluttonous Slimer escapes from the Eco-Containment Unit in the converted firehouse's basement. Using the trusty PKE (Psycho-Kinetic Energy) meter to track him, the team finds and captures

Slimer in his old haunt at the Sedgewick Hotel. However, something strange, and most likely sinister, is going on, because the PKE meter is still beeping. Now it's up to you and the ghost-busting team to figure out the cause of the spiritual commotion and restore relative order to New York City.

Of course, restoring order will involve plenty of property damage (the bill for which will be shown at the end of each level for bragging rights). *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* is boasting not only a fully destructible environment, but a smart one too. With the help of Terminal Reality's Velocity Engine, the game will know exactly where the structural damage to any object has occurred and react accordingly. Environmental damage is permanent and players can expect to find a room in much the same condition they left it in. As well as incorporating weight into its calculations, the physics engine has the power to have over a thousand characters on screen and have all bystanders with their own path-finding routines and reactions.

Red Fly Studio's PS2 and Wii versions of the game will be quite different, with more stylised characters, a truncated storyline and Wii Remote mapping. The PS2 and Wii will also sport a four-player, split-screen mode (something that the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions will not have).

In all versions of the game, players will





TRAILER
ON THE DVD



EVEN MORE HYPE

According to the game's official Website, since *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* was announced, it has become "one of the most hotly anticipated games of 2008" and has featured on the covers of a variety of magazines including *NGamer*, *Game Informer* and *Official Xbox Magazine*. *Ghostbusters* also features on 15 "Most Wanted of 2008" lists and is in eighth position on *PlayStation Magazine's* "Top 10 Games of 2008."



GHOSTBUSTERS

If you're cynical, then you can no doubt claim that *Ghostbusters* – the second most popular movie of 1984 (only Eddie Murphy's *Beverly Hills Cop* made more money that year!) – was more a case of clever marketing hype than anything else. Nevertheless, that wouldn't explain why readers of *Total Film* magazine chose *Ghostbusters* as the 44th greatest comedy film of all time sixteen years later, and why IGN.com named *Ghostbusters* the greatest comedy ever in 2005. Even the snooty American Film Institute ranked it 28th on its list of the top 100 comedies of all time.

Ghostbusters has clearly stood the test of time – as they say – but one still wonders how much of the \$230 million it made at the US box office that year (more than the second *Indiana Jones* movie did) was thanks to its catchy theme song and that “no ghosts” logo.

That logo has of course permeated our popular consciousness in a big way. Not just because they used it on the station wagon driven by the movie's three ‘ghost busters’ played by Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis back then, but because they slapped it on every tie-in product they could lay their hands on.

If you're really cynical, however, you might claim that *Ghostbusters*' most lasting legacy isn't the new computer game coming out this year, the two-for-the-price-of-one DVD box set that you can dig up at your local Look & Listen, or even the Ray Parker, Jr. pop song, which still gets airplay on radio stations specialising in '80s nostalgia. No, instead you can say it is Simba's Ghost Pops maize chip snacks that were introduced back then to cash in on the movie's popularity.

Some stuff you probably didn't know: actor Dan Aykroyd, who actually believes in ghosts, wrote a much scarier script for the film. He planned it to co-star Eddie Murphy and John Belushi. Murphy couldn't make it though, and Belushi OD'ed. The ghost busters were supposed to be dressed in S.W.A.T. clothing (replete with helmets) using wands instead of Proton Packs while travelling through time and space to fight ghosts. However, director/producer Ivan Reitman changed all that.

Reitman also told Parker to extend the *Ghostbusters* theme song from its original one minute and 15 seconds into a full song for the soundtrack album. (It was later stretched to six minutes for the disco mix!) And where did Parker get the idea for the song from? A TV commercial for a drain company. “And that was it!” Parker confessed in an interview. “I came up with the idea of ‘Who ya gonna call?’ And then I thought, there's no way you're going to sing ‘Ghostbusters’ in a song and make it sound good, so instead of singing it, I'd have a crowd answer me.”

Of course, Huey Lewis didn't agree and claimed that Parker had stolen the tune from his *I Want a New Drug*, which made it to number six on the US charts only six months earlier. The two settled out of court in 1985.

encounter ghost villains that can essentially be divided into two types: Corporeal ghosts (who are easily dealt with and eliminated) and Ethereal ghosts (who must be captured). Many of the old favourites villains made famous by the films, including the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, the Librarian and Gozer, will feature in the game, but there will be many new ghosts that need to be added to Tobin's Spirit Guide. Encounters with the supernatural villains will occur in a variety of locations, such as an old castle, a foggy graveyard, the library and hotel from the original film, as well as on the spiritual plane (or other world).

Players won't be facing these foes alone and empty handed. While the rest of the *Ghostbusters* team will be nearby when the going gets tough, players will do most of the ghost busting themselves. Equipped with the Unlicensed Nuclear Accelerator (or Proton Pack), onto which the HUD has been incorporated, as well as the PKE meter and ghost traps, players can choose between

four modes of fire: Proton, Electron, Neutron and Slime. While each mode has its uses, the Slime mode is the most intriguing. Slime can be used as a tether by shooting one blob of it at an object (or villain) and shooting the linked blob at another object (or wall for example) to join the two as the slime quickly contracts. Blobs of slime fired together can create a mine, which will explode onto ghosts flying nearby.

Although there is a chance that gameplay could become tedious with sluggish character movement and perhaps repetitive actions during ghost capturing, the soundtrack from the original film (including 75 minutes of unused orchestral sound) should have fans happily swimming in nostalgia. Multiplayer modes include not only a co-op mission, with a storyline unrelated to that of the main campaign, but also a Ghost versus Buster mode (where players can be either) and a Ghost-Catching mode (where players compete to catch the most ghosts).

NAG

Megan Hughes





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This is what happens when you keep your eyes open while sneezing.

FALLOUT 3

TWO HUNDRED YEARS HAVE passed since the bombs fell. The brooding twilight of Nuclear Winter has lifted, bequeathing the mouldering wreckage of the 21st-century American Dream to the windswept silence of the (mostly*) abandoned eastern seaboard. Somewhere beneath the buckled concrete and twisted girders of Washington DC, however, life goes on.

Welcome to Vault-Tec's Vault 101, Jewel of the Wastes, America's first choice in post-nuclear, high-security residential accommodation. For two centuries, Vault 101 has served the survivors of the Capital Wasteland, dutifully maintaining a steadfast and impenetrable four-metre barrier against the many dangers of the ruined world outside.

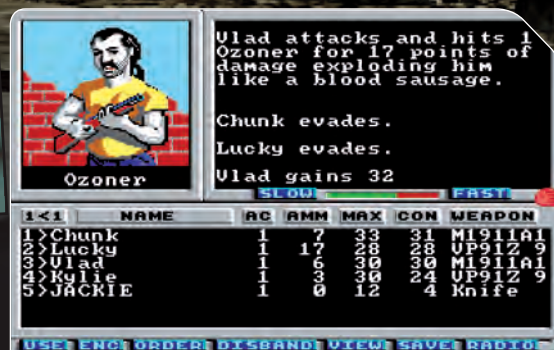
Well, until now. You wake up one morning to find that your dad has mysteriously absconded, and without the Vault Overseer's permission or even a packed lunch. Since mum's dead and

there's not really all that much to do in the Vault anyway, you decide to go looking for him.

"The idea," according to *Fallout 3* producer, Peter Hines, "is that we create a big sandbox game where you can create whatever kind of character you want and spend all your time doing whatever it is you want to do. We're not going to tell you what you have to do. We don't put time limits on it. We don't say you have to do this quest next. Just go have fun doing whatever it is you want to do."

A wasteland adventure of post-apocalyptic proportions awaits. **NAG**
Tarryn "Vault Girl" van der Byl

* Vault-Tec engineers cannot guarantee the non-attendance of hostile life-form simulation, including – but not limited to – grotesquely mutated arachnids, bandits, slavers and/or any and all persons of a disreputable or otherwise contentious disposition, and/or two-headed cows.



WELCOME TO THE WASTELAND

Before *Fallout*, there was *Wasteland*. Developed by Interplay, published by Electronic Arts, and released back in 1988 for the Apple II, *Wasteland* was an RPG set in the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust in late 21st-century North America. Players took executive command of a four-man squad of Desert Rangers, a paramilitary organisation operating out of Nevada, and slogged through the irradiated sands in search of whatever passed for fun in the bleak post-apocalypse. Or maybe just a warm, flat beer.

The game was subsequently ported to the Commodore 64 and IBM PC, and went on to spawn a sort-of-but-not-really sequel, *Fountain of Dreams*, which nobody talks about because it was rubbish.

After failing to acquire the rights to the *Wasteland* name from EA, Interplay subsidiary, Black Isle, decided instead to develop a "spiritual successor" to the game, dubbing it *Fallout* and slyly including the Red Ryder BB Gun and a Desert Ranger NPC. Originally designed using Steve Jackson Games' GURPS system, the game's ambiguous morality and explicit violence prompted some legal squabbling, and lead programmer, Tim Cain, came up with the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. (named for its seven primary attributes) character-system replacement. Only, it started out as the rather more underwhelming A.C.E.L.I.P.S. because Tim wasn't very good with anagrams.



FALLOUT 3 VERSION 1.0

Fallout 3 wasn't always Bethesda Softworks' *Fallout 3* – it was Black Isle's *Fallout 3*, codenamed *Van Buren*, before Black Isle was tragically shot and killed by Interplay on 8 December 2003. The game was approximately halfway through development, and set to take place in the American southwest (Arizona, Colorado, Utah and Nevada), bordering the New California Republic explored in the previous two titles. The following year, Interplay sold the *Fallout 3* licence to Bethesda for a \$1,175,000 minimum guaranteed advance against royalties.

In May 2007, the *Van Buren* tech demo was leaked onto the Internet. Gamers took their blue-and-yellow Vault 13 jumpsuits out of mothballs, and wept quietly into their Vault-Tec simulated Korn Flakes™ for the 'Fallout 3 That Never Was'.

WANT!

Bethesda recently announced a limited collector's edition of *Fallout 3*, set to pack a collectible 5-inch Vault Boy Bobble Head, an *Art of Fallout 3* hardback book and a Making of DVD into an exceedingly cool, metal Vault-Tec lunchbox.



LET'S GET S.P.E.C.I.A.L.

S.P.E.C.I.A.L. is what makes *Fallout* special. It's a classless, XP-based character system comprising three feature sets: Attributes, Skills and Perks.

The seven primary attributes are Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility and Luck, and their values have a very tangible effect on the game. There's an entire *Fallout 2* strategy guide dedicated to characters with an Intelligence of zero, for example, because they're quite literally too stupid to articulate anything more complex than a non-specific grunt.

Skills, initially derived from the core attribute values and expressed as percentages, represent a character's likelihood of successfully executing an action. As characters level up, additional points may be allocated to increase this percentile chance. During character creation, three skills are tagged for double-rate advancement, allowing for speedy specialisation. *Fallout 3*'s skill set has reportedly been reduced from 18 to 14, most likely due to some amalgamation of similar skills.

Finally, the Perk system offers an

extensive range of tweaks, including increased attribute and skill values and various combat bonuses. At the start of the game, players may optionally choose two special Perks (or traits), with both positive and negative ramifications. The Jinxed trait, for example, promises that your enemies will suffer a significantly increased chance of critical failure – but so will you. *Fallout 3* awards a new Perk every alternate level, a significant increase from previous titles.

In addition to these, the Karma system also sees a happy return. Depending on your character's choices – both nice and not so nice – you will earn yourself a number of epithets, serving as a sort of social reputation barometer. These in turn are likely to have a significant impact on others' reactions towards you. Karma titles will grant Xbox LIVE Achievements on the 360.

Besides the *Fallout* series, the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. system was also featured in the scandalously ignored *Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader*, while a modified version appeared in Troika Games' similarly scandalously ignored *Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura*.



SOUL CALIBUR IV

TRANSCEENDING HISTORY AND THE world, a tale of soul and swords eternally told. Now includes Darth Vader (for PlayStation 3) and Yoda (for Xbox 360) as playable characters, although Namco has stated that they would most likely unlock both for use on both consoles in a future patch. For the uninitiated, *Soul Calibur* is Namco's 'other' fighting-game series - the one that isn't *Tekken*. With an emphasis on weapon-based combat and easy, eight-way, free-roaming movement on the battlefield, *Soul Calibur* has always been the practical antithesis to *Tekken*'s rigid and technical approach to hand-to-hand combat. Two sides of the same coin, as it were.

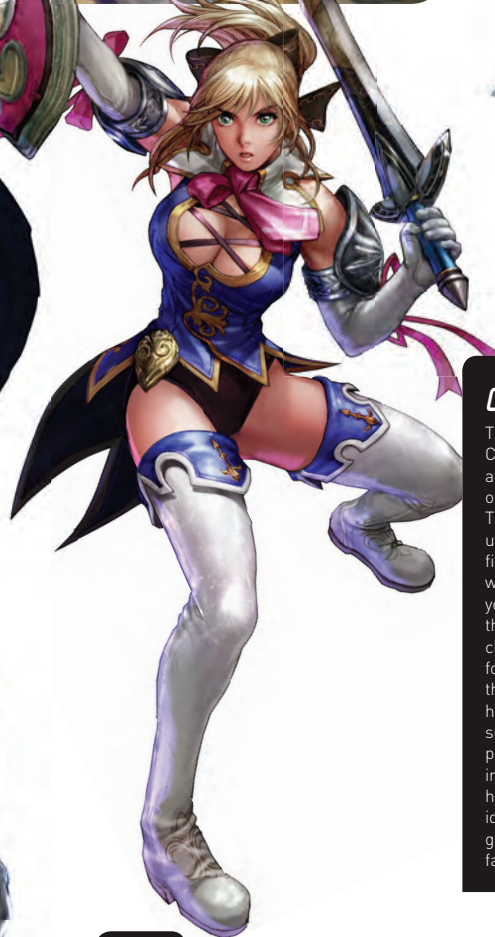
All of the series' staple characters, such as Ivy, Mitsurugi, Nightmare, Taki, Tira, Siegfried, Sophitia, Cassandra, Voldo, Maxi, Seong Mi-na, Yun-seong, Kilik, Xianghua,

Lizardman as well as Amy, Cervantes, Asteroth, Raphael and Zasalamel will be making a next-gen return, along with a few new faces. Hildegard von Krone, a female in knight's armour with a wolf's head motif and wielding a short sword and red lance, enters the arena. Another new character is the feisty, sword-wielding Scheherazade, named after the legendary Persian queen and the storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights*, in keeping with the esoteric naming conventions the series has traditionally employed. The last new character to be announced was Angol Fear, who seems to be a girl wielding what looks like a giant metal rod with a ball on the end.

It has been confirmed that the Create-a-Character mode popularised in *Soul Calibur III* will return and be usable in multiplayer. **NAG**

Miktar "Lizardman" Dracon





SOULS ONLINE

For the first time in the history of the series, *Soul Calibur* will have an online component, allowing competitive online play. Naturally, online play will be localised to the system, so don't expect PS3 owners fighting 360 owners online in epic Darth vs. Yoda battles - although that would be pretty cool. The exact functionality and features of the online mode are still sketchy at best for now.



CRITICAL FINISH-HER

The latest feature in the series is the Critical Finisher system, an interesting attempt to shift the game more towards offense and away from technical defence. There is another gauge, the Soul Gauge, under the character's health bar. This fills up while attacking and decreases when guarding. If the meter is empty, your opponent can deal you damage that will actually break off a part of your character's armour, making you weaker for the rest of the match. If this happens three times, reducing your armour from high to mid to low, your opponent gets a small window of opportunity in which to perform a Critical Finisher, which results in your instant death. Every character has a personalised Critical Finisher. The idea is to decrease the benefit of constant guarding, speeding the game up to a faster tempo.



Where'd they go?



Jenkins lit a fart in the outhouse... again

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

CHECK YOUR SACK, GRAB your tube and prepare to stand in line for the chopper for the first time. The spectacular *Battlefield* franchise is getting its very own next-generation console version, and it's bad to the bone... but in a good way.

Battlefield: Bad Company is only due for release towards the end of June (the 23rd we've heard), but the good people at Electronic Arts South Africa managed to slip us a few keys for the multiplayer Beta test. The good news is that the console version flies wide of the PC version, which has become somewhat relegated to death these days thanks to gamers bending the rules here and there. *Battlefield: Bad Company* is casual and fun, quicker and easier to play and doesn't take itself seriously – just what the franchise needed. It's based on the concept of the PC version and has a distinctly original take on the *Battlefield* game dynamic.

For some perspective, the people who love *Battlefield* at NAG (the same ones the Beta keys were distributed to) are

traditionally hardcore PC gamers who aren't convinced that first-person shooters are viable on a console. This attitude is largely centred on the argument that there's no mouse, and therefore you can't aim properly. Considering this preconception, what kind of chance did *Bad Company* really have? There is also lag to consider, and although LIVE hasn't been officially launched in South Africa (yet, snore...) any 360 gamer worth his/her salt has an account anyway and connects to online games, and depending on the type of game, the experience can occasionally be a little choppy. With this much stacked against it, things didn't look too good, and all of this before the download was finished.

GOLD RUSH

So, bad news then for *Battlefield: Bad Company*... Well, not actually. It's pretty damn fine, everything considered, and the fact that this is coming from a now-sheepish, hardcore-PC *Battlefield* fanatic should carry plenty of weight. If a jaded

HANDS ON



TESTED

gaming journalist can go from not liking something based entirely on the back of the box to loving it, then you might want to get your own copy when it's finally released. But enough fluff and onto the game.

Bad Company is simply *Battlefield* on steroids. There's less messing around and much more immediate action. It takes a little flow-dynamic inspiration from games such as *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* and *Frontlines: Fuel of War* by focusing all of the action around a specific common goal: three crates of gold. Players (twenty-four on a map at the same time) from all over Xbox LIVE connect to a level/map, and the action is split between attacking and defending this goal. The core game is a first-person shooter where players must select a class of soldier before joining the action – this choice affects the type of weapons and abilities available. So, if you prefer destroying tanks, you select the demolitions class; if you prefer hanging back and providing medical support, you select the support class. As you play and become more proficient, you progress



through the ranks, and with each successive rank 'upgrade' you not only gain status, but can eventually unlock new weapons.

But back to the action. Once the game starts, the attackers must destroy the crates while the defenders defend them. In more good news, both sides have access to vehicles, so it's quite possible to jump into a tank (or helicopter, jeep, boat, etc.) and roll, fly, drive or float your way into the enemy base – just watch out for rockets and landmines. Once all the crates are destroyed at one location, the 'frontline' falls back or presses forward (depending on which side you're on) to a new location. The fighting then focuses around that area until the last crate is destroyed or the attackers run out of time. This style of game dynamic is excellent at keeping everyone in the game interested and involved. That said, some players just don't like this type of group involvement and area-specific fighting, and prefer the lone-wolf approach. If this sounds like you, then you should probably try the demo before you commit to the game.

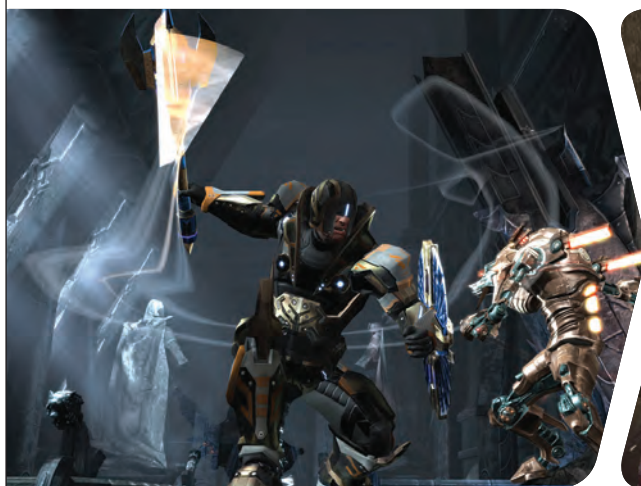
ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Considering the focus the developers have placed on destructible buildings, trees and even the ground, no *Battlefield: Bad Company* discussion would be complete without taking a closer look at this overly flaunted feature. Yes, it's all true. Everyone in the game gets their own building permit. If you see a wall or fence you don't like, just let rip with a rocket, grenade or tank and it's gone, leaving behind your own personal entrance (or escape route). You can also cut down trees and blow chunks of earth out of the ground. However, all of this destructive potential isn't completely 'dynamic' in the way you might expect, and to preserve a level playing field you can't, for example, flatten a building to its foundations – the thinking here is that it would interfere with the game-playing experience. But don't believe everything you read. If you consider the pace of the game, this isn't completely accurate because your overriding job is blowing up crates or defending them, and not spending the whole game trying to level a building. The type of destruction is also limited to a predefined framework;

and eventually after you've destroyed your twentieth wall, tree or hill you've pretty much seen and done all there is to see and do. Regardless of the limitations, the amount of debris flying around and that insecure sensation you have while hiding inside a building make for some compelling fighting that feels lethal, confusing and is almost exactly how you'd expect things to be in reality. Add this to the overall action of the game, and you've got an exhilarating ride that feels fresh and exciting each time you pick up the controller.

Will this game be a hit? Well, if it's fierce fighting, a sense of being part of something bigger, bragging rights and excitement you're looking for, then *Bad Company* delivers. If you consider that all this fun and excitement can be had in just the multiplayer game, imagine how the single-player game is going to work. Everything considered, *Bad Company* seems to be a rocking and rolling experience that should see an entire community spring up and start enjoying what PC gamers have been enjoying for years. **NAG**

Michael James



TOO HUMAN

THE AESIR, A RACE that favours cybernetic enhancements for their military power, and the Emir, who use war machines to fight for them, have been fighting for control of Earth. In an attempt to bring an end to the fighting, and to claim final victory, the Aesir detonated several nuclear weapons, hoping to eliminate the Emir. They were partly successful as the nuclear detonations did wipe out the Emir, but the Emir's machines survived and continued to fight. The detonations also brought about the Thimble Winter, and Ice Age covering the entire planet.

Baldur is a cybernetic-enhanced god who has been sent to earth to protect the Aesir, the last human race, from absolute extinction. At the onset of the game, players must choose one of the five original character classes (though more will be available via downloadable content), namely the Berserker, Bioengineer, Champion, Commando and Defender, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The Berserker offers a melee attack offensive but cannot take much punishment, the

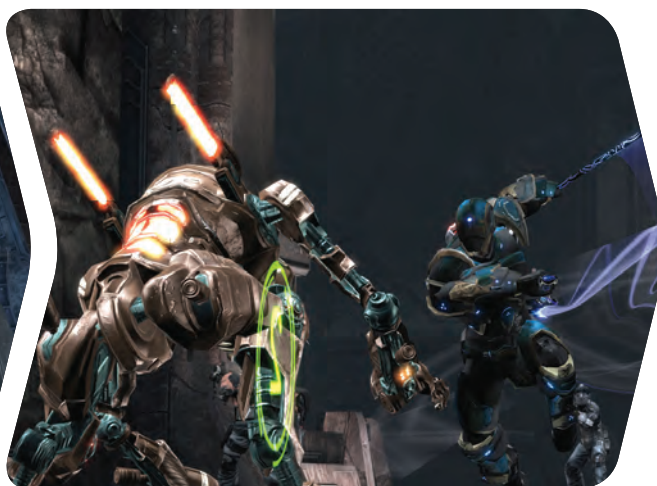
Bioengineer specialises in healing (both himself and team mates), the Champion specialises in air combat, the Commando is an explosives expert and the Defender can absorb more damage than any other class.

Whichever class the player chooses, and whether you choose to align yourself with the humans or the machines (one offering more weapons functions while the other provides more attack moves), you will still end up playing as Baldur, who can pick up cyber enhancements as the game progresses. A huge number of enhancements and upgrades, which will ultimately make Baldur more powerful but may come at the cost of his humanity, are available in each of the 50 levels of the game. Certain upgrades require specific skills levels or classes before they can be equipped, however. Thanks to an automatic-salvage system in the game, managing a bulging Inventory is no longer a problem. When the Inventory's capacity limit has been reached, the system, which can be adjusted to suit your own playing style, automatically dumps the weakest items in favour of new,

stronger items. All the items will come in handy in the major battles Baldur will have to engage in. Using a range of firearms and melee combat, and creating elaborate combinations by stringing together complex moves, players can take on any of the 50 to 70 enemies that might appear onscreen at one time. The control system, though slightly different to other games, is supposedly easy to learn, and takes a lot of frustration out of any title.

The HUD's design has been simplified, and everything (from your experience points to your Life Meter) sits neatly in the corner of the screen. The Statistics screens allows the player to keep track of all sorts of interesting information, such as defensive and offensive statistics as well as hours of play, while keeping track of all the standard RPG categories. A Skill Tree, which unlocks only once the player has reached level five, allows the player to choose which branch of skills to invest in, as you won't be able to follow them all.

While most of the main game dynamic is centred around the Aesir and machine



THE BATTLE CONTINUES: EPIC GAMES VS. SILICON KNIGHTS

Silicon Knights and Epic Games have been involved in some serious backwards-and-forwards litigation processes since July last year, and they've yet to come to any sort of settlement. After Silicon Knights filed a lawsuit claiming that Epic Games had kept a working Unreal Engine 3 kit to themselves as an "unfair advantage," Epic filed a counter suit and, in November last year, a motion to have the lawsuit dismissed.

Epic Games' counter claim was unsuccessful, so Silicon Knights' suit is going ahead. Now, according to Shacknews.com, "subpoenas have been issued to multiple licensees of Unreal Engine 3 to testify in the ongoing litigation," which could potentially include the likes of Square Enix, Ubisoft and Electronic Arts.

There is also a chance that should the licensees be forced to submit their contracts as unsealed court evidence, trade secrets could become public knowledge. Epic VP, Mark Rein said to Shacknews.com, "I'm leaving the litigation to the lawyers but, if this is the case, I'd like to apologise to any of our licensees who Silicon Knights have inconvenienced." For those gamers who actually care about this sort of peacock posturing, the one important bit of information already exposed is that Silicone Knights paid Epic \$750,000 for the rights to use the Unreal Engine 3. That's around R6 million for any aspiring local developers.

battles on the barren planet Earth, Baldur will also be able to explore the contrastingly beautiful world of cyberspace. It is in cyberspace that Baldur can learn and gain new abilities to be used in the battles on Earth and unlock a side story. Through fully exploring the cyberspace world, players can affect changes in the main game and possibly change the story altogether. Rare items will also be found there.

Thanks to the Unreal Engine 3 that Silicon Knights is making good use of, *Too Human* is boasting "cinematic quality" visuals in "true 720p" and not a single loading screen (provided that you don't try to skip ahead of an interactive cut-scene by pushing buttons). However, players will not have full control over the camera's rotation, barring the ability to zoom in and out at certain times, which many may find frustrating.

Also, expect to see two more *Too Human* titles, as this is just the first title in a trilogy. Hopefully, both the story and the character of Baldur are strong enough to keep us interested for all three titles. **NAG**

Megan Hughes





SACRED 2: FALLEN ANGEL

AS FAR AS THE *Sacred* series goes, it's a *Diablo*-esque hack-and-slash with an emphasis on an open fantasy world ripe for exploration, monster bashing and levelling-up for more monster bashing. The first game really managed to nail the formula, introducing interesting combo-skill-chaining, rideable mounts and hundreds of quests and side-quests. Walking the same path, *Sacred 2* also involves learning skills (magical or melee), wielding weapons and shields, as well as battling boss monsters. In *Sacred 2*, however, these boss monsters ("Unique" in *Diablo* terminology) affect the morale of the minions around them. Trampling a boss monster under your mighty steed will send his peons running into the hills. Just as in *Sacred*, there will be no randomly generated content: every object has been placed with the purpose to bring a unique quality to the world.

There is no loading, the entire game world being one seamless experience, even when heading into one of the game's many (over 140) dungeons. Adding a bit of spice to the world, NPCs will act differently depending on the time of day. They'll eat, nap and go about their daily chores depending on the time and weather. This is the first time *Sacred* will appear on console, so hopefully the control scheme won't make you want to kill someone.

CHARACTER CLASSES

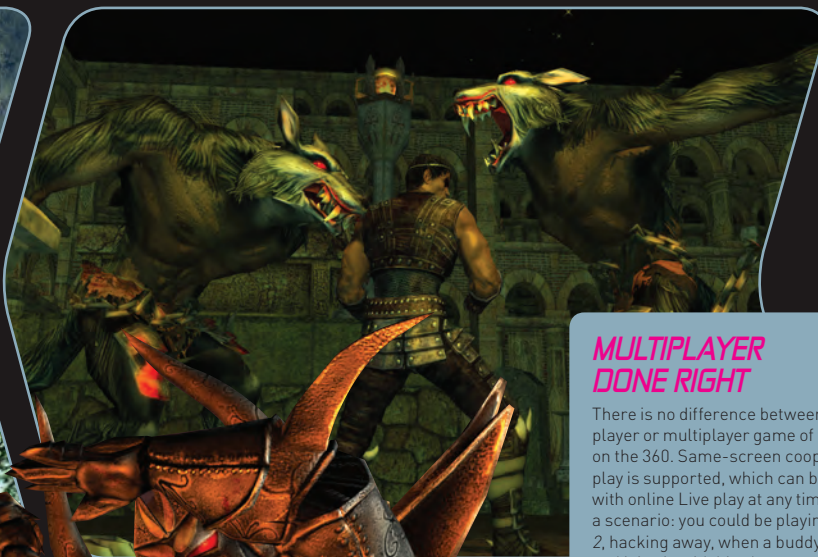
It wouldn't be a hack-and-slash if you couldn't choose your flavour of health and mana potion-induced monster culling. *Sacred 2* features six characters that double as character classes: Dryad, Seraphim, High Elf, Inquisitor, Temple Guardian and Shadow Warrior. Each character has a unique play style, utilising different types of attacks or focusing more on magic or

BLIND GUARDIAN

Blind Guardian will record the theme song for *Sacred 2*, according to the power-metal band's lead vocalist, Hans Jürgen Kürsch. Blind Guardian is a German heavy metal band formed in 1980 and often cited as one of the seminal and influential forces in the power-metal and speed-metal sub-genres.

"We are very proud of the cooperation with Blind Guardian and look forward to providing the band with a virtual stage in our game. For many years I've been a big fan of the band, and I'm sure the new *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel*-themed single will be a hit with fans too," stated Holger Flöttmann of Ascaron in a press release.

"To us, *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel* is a dream come true, because, like all the other fantasy computer-game maniacs, we had to wait a very long time for the sequel to the legendary *Sacred*. Thanks to its complex fantasy world and detailed characters, *Sacred* has become one of our absolute favourites, and we loved both its storyboard and the tie-in novels. It's just awesome to become part of that *Sacred* world now. Music, story and images will merge to a perfect whole," said Blind Guardian singer, Hansi Kürsch.



MULTIPLAYER DONE RIGHT

There is no difference between a single-player or multiplayer game of *Sacred 2* on the 360. Same-screen cooperative play is supported, which can be combined with online Live play at any time. To paint a scenario: you could be playing *Sacred 2*, hacking away, when a buddy sits down and joins in with his character brought over on memory card. Both of you can then go online to play with two more people, either by joining their game or by inviting them to yours. Because of the open-ended nature of the world, players can either assist each other with their story-line quests or just go off hunting on side-quests together.

The whole experience is designed to be seamless and versatile. There are two modes for cooperative play: Campaign and Free Mode. Campaign lets you travel together completing the storyline missions, while Free Mode unlocks the entire world and only enables side-quests (great if you don't want to progress through the story fighting bosses to unlock areas). Two additional modes will be included after release according to the developers: PvE, where you fight (on your own or with friends) multiple waves of enemies; and PvP, where players can duel. Both modes will have online leader boards.

The PC version of *Sacred 2* will follow the usual route found in the first game: online play will be either Open or Closed, with Closed characters being stored securely online to prevent hacking. Open characters are stored on your PC and remain vulnerable to hacks, cheats and edits, depending on the type of player you are.

head bashing. There are two campaigns, Light and Shadow, in which the Seraphim follows the "path of peace" in the Light campaign, while the Inquisitor is pretty much predestined to follow the Shadow campaign. The rest of the characters can go either way, and all characters will have access to different types of mounts as well as a unique mount for each class. In *Sacred*, you and your horse were best friends, so naturally that specific feature was going to make a return. The Seraphim (who uses her wings as both weapon and armour) gets the tiger as a unique mount, while the Shadow Warrior gets a kick-ass hellhound. Naturally, the horse remains a staple companion for all classes. Not only does the mount have its own impact on battle, but the class-specific ones allow for special skills. Not much info has been released about the other unique mounts. **NAG**

Miktar "Kringer" Dracon



THEY

IT'S 2012. **TERRORISM HAS** destroying much of England. Out of nowhere, and seemingly overnight, robots invade the already war-ravaged country with one clear intention: destroying all key points left in the city and anyone or anything that stands in their way. Where the robots have come from and who is actually controlling them is a mystery. Playing as a nameless British soldier who has lost most of his squadron in combat, you are accompanied by your best friend, comrade and pilot. Not long into the claimed 20 hours of gaming action, players will discover that creatures known as **Phantoms** are controlling the robots. These creatures, who cannot be seen by average humans (indicating, at the very least, that at some point our British soldier hero will become more than average), attach themselves to the machines' heads, infusing them with a higher level of intelligence and initiative. The player then has to decide which to kill first: the **Phantoms** or the robots. Either will do, apparently, as neither can function without the other.

In an FPS, the most important aspect is the player's arsenal. The game's developer, Metropolis Software, has tried something new by equipping the main character with a single weapon. Of course, the weapon isn't just any old machine gun, shotgun or

rifle, but rather a heavily modifiable gun. Using what is called the Weapon Tuning System, this gun can be transformed into a vast number of unique weapons, such as a sniper rifle that shoots energy grenades by adding upgrades, updates and modules into the four upgrade slots. Each weapon creation can be allocated to a different hotkey, allowing players to adjust tactics and style as they move through the levels, and energy bullets can be replenished at power generators available throughout the game. There's even the option to create your own skins for your weapon and trade them online.

They, apparently inspired by the TV series *X-Files* and *Heroes* (the mystery and intrigue bits), is also boasting, along with DirectX 10 support, a “heavy usage of physics” and a wholly destructible environment “relevant for gameplay.” What this is supposed to mean is that destroying certain buildings may lead to players finding shortcuts through levels as well as special upgrades for their weapons. Of course, falling building debris will still damage health. Deathmatch and team-deathmatch missions will also be available in the multiplayer modes. **NAG**

Megan Hughes



New Innovation



**ASUS G1Sn and G2Sg laptops lead the charge
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Unstoppable G-Force



For the corporate warrior who is also an after-hours fighter on the electronic battlefields, the G1Sn / G2Sg gaming laptops are the machines of choice, custom-made solutions for those who play as hard as they work. The G1Sn and G2Sg incorporate Intel® Centrino® Processor Technology.

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Sensory Experience

Mere processing power is not enough; being engineered for gaming means the G1Sn and G2Sg are sensory maestros. It begins with two sizes of ASUS Color Shine LCD (15.4" G1Sn / 17" G2Sg wide aspect) for stunning visuals in fine detail, side and front speakers, as well as game-activated (DirectX 9/10) Direct Flash sidelights that come on during game play. Together with distinctive, brushed surface of the unique LCD cover to the carbon-fiber effect of the keyboard surround, the gaming series is a mobile entertainment powerhouse given a sci-fi makeover.

Celeron, Celeron Inside, Centrino, Centrino Inside, Centrino Logo, Core Inside, Intel, Intel Logo, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel Inside Logo, Intel Viiv, Intel vPro, Itanium, Itanium Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, Viiv Inside, vPro Inside, Xeon, and Xeon Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries.



GUILTY GEAR 2: OVERTURE

IT SEEMS THAT MANY developers are taking their series in new directions and exploring new genres. Where the *Guilty Gear* series established itself as a modern, high-resolution *Street Fighter II* contender, *Guilty Gear 2: Overture* instead dabbles in a more traditional action genre (think *God of War*, *Devil May Cry* and so forth). Taking place five years after *Guilty Gear* (Sol Badguy is still free and Ky Kiske is king of Illyria, which is under attack), Sol runs into a wanted poster for him, which he interprets as Ky's way of asking Sol to help. Here's where things get a little different: while the game is an all-out action title with some special moves and animations familiar to *Guilty Gear* fans, there is also a troop management element. There are points you can capture in the levels that act as spawn points for troops, such as light infantry, heavy infantry and magic-based troops.

Basically, you have to run in and attack the enemy 'Hero' or base. Each time you defeat the enemy Hero or base, it loses a chunk of Life Bar and the battle continues until one side is defeated (or the timer runs out). So, it's kind of like a fighting, strategy game. Sounds like the newer *Dynasty Warriors* titles, to be fair. The videos currently available show a very fast-moving, fast-paced tactical strategy: much of the pace is set by the incredible speeds with which your character can dash around the battlefield. While the peons on the field are easily dispatched, the enemy Hero will require more fighting game-style combination moves to tackle (which emulate the more traditional *Guilty Gear* fighting games in the series). Four-player online battles on Xbox LIVE confirmed! Rock on! **NAG**

Miktar "Ky Kiske" Dracon

GUILTY GEAR

Designed by artist Daisuke Ishiwatari, the *Guilty Gear* series has predominantly been a sprite-based 2D fighter with a penchant for detailed high-resolution anime-style visuals, a kicking rock/metal soundtrack, solid fighting mechanics and moody Gothic influences. The series has branched into multiple lines, each with their own sequels and spin-offs.

GUILTY GEAR

- *Guilty Gear* (1998) [PlayStation]
- *Guilty Gear 2: Overture* (2007) [360]

GUILTY GEAR X SERIES/ REVISIONS

- *Guilty Gear X: By Your Side* (2000) [Arcade, Dreamcast, PS2, PC]
- *Guilty Gear X 1.5* (2003) [Arcade]
- *Guilty Gear X Plus* (2003) [PS2]
- *Guilty Gear X: Advance Edition* (2002) [Game Boy Advance]

GUILTY GEAR XX SERIES/REVISIONS

- *Guilty Gear XX: The Midnight Carnival* (2002) [Arcade, PS2, PC]
- *Guilty Gear XX #Reload* (2003) [Arcade, PS2, Xbox, PC (2005), PSP]
- *Guilty Gear XX /* (2005) [Arcade (2006), PS2]
- *Guilty Gear XX Core* (2006) [Arcade, (2007) PS2, Wii]
- *Guilty Gear XX Core Plus* (2008) [PS2]

GUILTY GEAR PORTABLE SERIES

- *Guilty Gear Petit* (2001) [WonderSwan]
- *Guilty Gear Petit 2* (2001) [WonderSwan]
- *Guilty Gear Club* (2005) [Mobile phones]
- *Guilty Gear RoA* (2006) [Mobile]
- *Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers* (2006) [DS]
- *Guilty Gear: Judgment* (2006) [PSP]

OTHER GUILTY GEAR GAMES/SPINOFFS

- *Guilty Gear Isuka* (2004) [Arcade, PS2, Xbox, PC]

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PLUNDER

Developer→ Backbone Entertainment | Certain Affinity | Publisher→ Capcom
Genre→ RTS | Release Date→ June 2008

TIME TO GET OUT the bottles of rum, pieces of eight and practise your pirate phrases, land lubbers, because Backbone Entertainment is putting the final touches to their 'casual', real-time strategy title, *Plunder*. And plunder you shall, in teams of up to four players on a LAN or eight players online or as a single player with AI team mates. On a map with hexagonal tiles, you and your team mates will start at your volcanic pirate base and begin your trips across the seas to capture both neutral and enemy towns (both of which have a tendency to fight back), or attack enemy vessels

roaming the same seas. Each captured town will bring in one of the three valuable resources - rum, gold or wood - which can be used to upgrade and customise your pirate ship. Team strategy becomes important in keeping towns out of enemy hands, as towns can be very easily taken over, and the team with the most number of towns captured wins. The game also boasts 25 different challenges that players can engage in, as well as a map editor to create your own maps to plunder and share online. Ahoy! **NAG**

Megan Hughes



COMMANDO: STEEL DISASTER

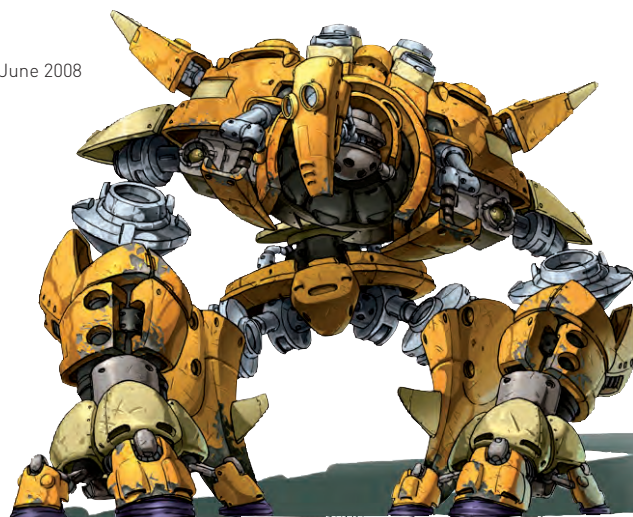
Developer→ Lexicon Entertainment | Publisher→ Nintendo | Genre→ Action | Release Date→ June 2008

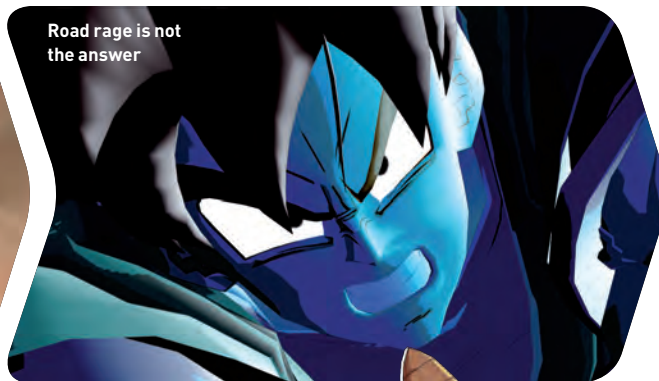
WHAT MAKES A GOOD game these days? Is it destructible terrain, big guns or massive missions? Well, this new game from Lexicon Entertainment seems to incorporate all of the above, and a whole lot more. *Commando: Steel Disaster* has finally been given the green light by Nintendo. The game offers some truly spectacular effects as well as drivable vehicles and an insane number of weapons. The game details the exploits of the heroic Storm, who just happens to be fighting a desperate battle against the evil Rattlesnake Corporation. The game also seems to be highly stylised in the graphics department, with some truly breathtaking environments as well as complex and in-depth boss battles. There

will also be 20 different types of enemy that Storm will have to face in his quest to bring down the mighty corporation. Another added feature that players will see is special weather effects, which affect the game almost as much as Storm's weapons do. Not only will Storm have to deal with the various elements of Mother Nature, but he will also have to keep his head and be on the lookout for hidden missions.

However you slice it, *Commando: Steel Disaster* looks like an exciting side-scrolling action shooter in which players will be able to make full use of the Nintendo DS's hardware and features. Expect this game to hit our shores sometime around June. **NAG**

Justin Slabbert





Developer→ Dimps | **Publisher**→ Atari | **Genre**→ Fighting | **Release Date**→ June 2008

IT SEEMS THAT THERE are still enough fans of anime/manga to merit a next-gen addition to an already overflowing catalogue of *Dragon Ball Z* fighting games. *Burst Limit* is the first *DBZ* game to be released for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, and our hands-on time with the tiny press demo we received established a few things. The cell-shade look of the series looks even better in high definition, the fighting system has been tightened up a bit and it's very hard to understand what's going on when everything is in Japanese.

Basically, *Burst Limit* is like the *Budokai* game series, but more like *Shin Budokai*, not *Budokai Tenkaichi* (which had a third-person view, in case you forgot). Many in-game cut-scenes have been added and

more dramatic camera angles are triggered by battle situations. Another new addition is support characters that help in specific scenarios, although truth be told, we have no idea what triggered Krillin to suddenly jump in to sucker punch our opponent. In one scenario, we literally managed to battle our way up into the clouds, before being slammed back down into the ground by what looked like an energy fart. Awesome!

Online play is planned, along with 35 characters and 15 "what if" scenarios that deviate from the original storyline. In case you were wondering, *Burst Limit* is considered a "series reboot" and will once again let you play through the original storyline. **NAG**

Miktar “Nnnngggggyyaaaah!” Dracon



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Deeper Underground - Tomb Raider 8: Underworld

The anxiety of seeing the series die and the euphoria of experiencing its rebirth has since seeped past: This is where the going gets tough. Can Crystal Dynamics avoid

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CHARTS AND PLAYLISTS

X-BOX 360 CHART

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2. **N ASSASSIN'S CREED**
3. **N NEED FOR SPEED: PRODRIFT**
4. **N FIFA 2008**
5. **N HALO 3**
6. **N KANE AND LINCH: DEAD MEN**
7. **N PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008**
8. **N MASS EFFECT**
9. **N GUITAR HERO 3: LEGENDS OF ROCK**
10. **N WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008**

CHART LEGEND

GAMING
NEWS

grand theft auto IV

Online petition asks Boll to stop

The German director best known for his movie adaptations of videogames is hardly popular with fans of the

Grand Theft Auto IV

Grand Theft Auto IV The first true sequel to the original PS2 'Grand Theft Auto' has been announced for next generation consoles. GTA.

COMING SOON

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames

'Mercenaries 2: World in Flames' is an explosive open-world action game set in a massive, highly

Cloud Strife in Unreal Tournament III

has added drums and a new user made mod was

Rock Band Harmonix

has added drums and a new user made mod was

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GRAND THEFT AUTO IV [360]

It's Grand! It contains Theft! And Autos! And a clichéd, gritty plot. While we applaud Rockstar for "keeping it real," all we want to do is drive around the city and turn pedestrians into road kill. Have we ever mentioned how badly we miss *Carmageddon*? But seriously, *GTA IV* really is everything one could hope for, minus the oddball humour that made the first two so funny.

MYTHOS [PC]

So this is what Bill Roper [of *Diablo* fame] has been up to instead of working on *Hellgate: London*. *Mythos* smells like a *Diablo 2*, quacks like a *Diablo 2* plus *Titan Quest* and even throws in some new conventions of its own. Not to make too fine a point of it, but when *Mythos* is past Beta, it's going to give *Dungeon Runners* a real run for its micropayment money. *Mythos* will be "free," and that's never a bad thing.

GRID (DEMO) [PC/360]

Codemasters literally blasted out of the starting gates with *GRID*, a racing game that "celebrates everything with four wheels." It is so slick, so stylish and so much fun. We think that *Need for Speed* and *Gran Turismo* may finally have a contender that actually attempts to take on both series – if you can believe it. Why not check out the demo on the DVD and decide for yourself. Naturally, the demo isn't representative of the full game, so we've included a bunch of trailers on the DVD as well.

TRACKMANIA NATIONS FOREVER [PC]

This new re-release of an already exemplary free game (also on the DVD) combines a new, dashing interface with some slick polish and much-needed tweaks to provide possibly the best *TrackMania* experience this side of *TrackMania United Forever*. Included on the DVD this month is a bunch of tracks we've designed at the office to challenge each other. See how you do!

BOOM BOX [WII]

Well who would have thought? Steven Spielberg actually knows how to create a good game (or more realistically, knows how to fund a proper design). *BOOM BLOX* "fixes all that is wrong with *Jenga*" by adding explosions, chickens and an all-round family-friendly design to provide something fresh, interesting and just a little exciting even if you're over ten.

ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Reviews section

VITAL INFO: Where to get it, what it costs and who you need.

PC SPEC: Our rating for the hardware requirements of games is space age. Check the box on the other page.

GAME NAME: This end up. The bit you tell your friends. The bit you remember – with your brain!

AWARDS: Our awards mean something: it means we agreed on a game, which is rare, trust us.



THINK INSIDE THE BOX

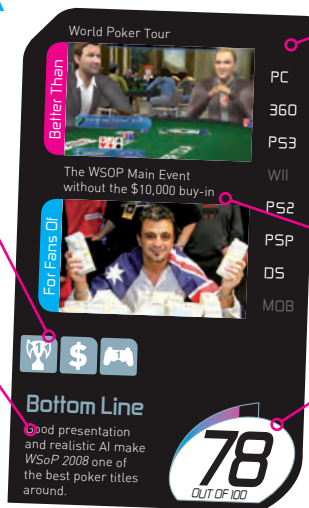
ICONS: It's just like a super-ultra-mini review: you just glance and learn!

BOTTOM LINE: Too many words, not enough pictures? Don't worry – we'll bottom-line it for ya.

PLATFORMS: Check it: new coloured tabbed system showing which systems the game appears on and which one we reviewed it on.

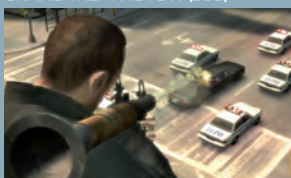
LIKE, Y'KNOW, STUFF: We try to keep things in perspective using these two blocks.

SCORE: Sometimes it's a number (usually it is). Sometimes it's a picture, or something snarky. We like to mix things up a little.



WEB SCORES

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV [360]



NAG	★★★★★
METACRITIC	96/100
GAMERANKINGS	98.4/100

BOOM BLOX [WII]



NAG	88/100
METACRITIC	85/100
GAMERANKINGS	88/100

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS [PS2]



NAG	84/100
METACRITIC	62/100
GAMERANKINGS	63.9/100

THE REVIEW ICONS

The NAG review icons aim to help you get a better idea of what a game is like.



ACTION: When you gotta blast, smash, crash and mash your way to victory, it's Action.



BABYSITTING: Put the kids to bed, you gotta Babysit this game to make it love you.



BITCHIN': When a game just plain rocks despite everything, then it is worthy of the Bitchin'.



BORING: Grab your blanket and teddy, we might be in for some Boring to put you to sleep.



BUGGY: Truth be told, there is just no excusing a Buggy game because games aren't cheap.



BUTTON MASHER: Using only the power of your manly thumb, you can beat this game, Button Masher.



CASH-IN/LICENSE: Some companies totally Cash-in on License games, good or bad.



CINEMATIC: Sweet-ass cut-scenes, dramatic camerawork and awesome scenes are Cinematic.



CLONE: We've seen it before and we'll see it again, because people always Clone good stuff.



CO-OP: It is dangerous to go alone. Take this. A friend. Water with cooperation for Co-op Attack.



COMPETITIVE: You don't think Ranked Match is a feature; you think it should be mandatory.



FOREIGN: No clue what the game is about or even what is said? Confusing plot? It's Foreign!



MULTIPLAYER: The maximum number of people who can play per copy of the game.



ONLINE: For games that play well with others and generally mean playing with others, Online.



PARTY: Get some friends and move the couch, Party games are frikkin' sweet.



PIECE OF POO: Sometimes no matter how hard you try, you just can't squeeze a diamond out of a turd.



STUPID PEOPLE: Don't worry little buddy, this game holds your hand like a friend.

WILL IT RUN? - PC GAME SPECS

PC game specs are a pain for us, because we need to list them for those people who don't consult the box before buying a game. Instead, the reviews will now have a nice number ranking on the side. Higher numbers mean a game is more machine intensive. If a game has all the numbers lit up, it'll run on a 5-year-old piece of junk up to the most bad-ass of machines.

- 5 Your machine has a DirectX 10 graphics card, a dual-core or higher CPU and 2GB or more RAM. You are the centre of gaming-fu. This game will honour your investment. **[DX10 graphics card; dual/quad-core CPU; 2GB+ RAM]**
- 4 Your graphics card has a respectable 256MB of memory and your CPU sits at the higher end of 2GHz, backed by 1-2GB of RAM. A worthy rig for a worthy game. **[256MB graphics card with DX9; 2GHz or more; 1-2GB RAM]**
- 3 Your card sits between 128 and 256MB of RAM with at least DirectX 8 support, while your 2GHz Pentium 4 churns happily with between 512MB and 1GB of RAM. We assume you're slowly saving for an upgrade. **[256MB+ graphics card with DX8; 2GHz Pentium 4; 512MB-1GB RAM]**
- 2 Okay, so you have a graphics card that falls below the 128MB memory point but supports DX8, a chip that you can't call 2GHz even if you wanted and you have 256MB or less RAM. Your PC might be getting more Office action than you'd like to admit. **[128MB or lower graphics card with DX8; Below 2GHz chip; 256MB or lower RAM]**
- 1 You really don't think about your PC specs much. In fact, any hint of upgrade money is spent on something more practical, like a coffee maker with a timer. Fresh coffee first thing in the morning always beats playing games. **[Can run XP, will play game]**

NAG AWARDS

EDITOR'S CHOICE: If a game boasts this award, it means everyone in the office agrees that the game rocks. Serials.

MUST PLAY: The thing about the Must Play award is that it can happen anywhere, with any game, good or bad. Somehow, you must play this game.



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WORST MONSTERS IN GAMING

Not every monster can be a glamorous, huge reptilian lizard-beast with venom attacks that do 99,999 DMG, so in honour of those monsters that were wading in the shallow end of the 'monster awesome' gene pool, we decided to give you a heads-up in case you ever encounter one of these in the wild. Careful, they spit!

WALT PRETORIUS

We're not sure what kind of a monster this is, other than it shoots eggs out of its mouth and likes to pretend to be a girl. If you see one, make sure you never expose the weak point under your chin to the damn thing. It'll spit an egg right there and kill you. One shot.



TARRYN VAN DER BYL

We know that penguins have the ability to fly through space, pooping out smaller penguins to absorb incoming enemy fire, but we don't like it. No sir. If you see this horrible abomination anywhere nearby, be sure to use dual lasers.



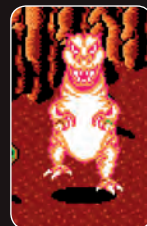
ADAM LIEBMAN

Shaped a lot like the S-shaped Tetris block, this monster likes to sneak into your games and prevent you from making a solid five-line block. It doesn't get worse than that! The only way to kill this monster is to use corrosive acid that eats flesh.



MIKTAR DRACON

Who has ever heard of a Tyrannosaurus Rex that shoots fireballs? It's ridiculous, that's what it is. This monster also has a habit of finding all your friends on Facebook and telling them that you're a transvestite. The best way to deal with this beast is to just tell it, slowly, that you don't like it and it should go away.



ALEX JELAGIN

When we first saw this monster, we thought, "Hey, that's a Baal! We like Baals!" but then we realised we're talking about Baal, not a ball. Silly us. The quickest way to beat this monster is to just keep throwing low-level warriors at it until it finally gets bored and decides to move elsewhere. Works every time.



TIME CRISIS 4 [PS3]



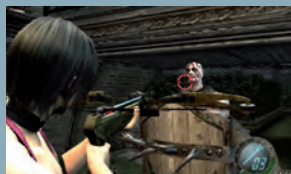
NAG	69/100
METACRITIC	60/100
GAMERANKINGS	61/100

DARK SECTOR [PS3]



NAG	78/100
METACRITIC	71/100
GAMERANKINGS	72.5/100

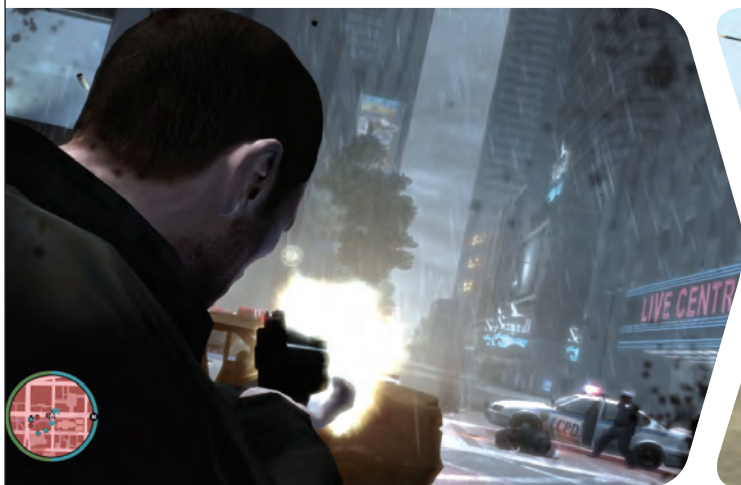
RESIDENT EVIL 4 [WII]



NAG	96/100
METACRITIC	91/100
GAMERANKINGS	90.9/100

PLAYER ADVISORY

Look, it's a game about low-class Eastern European mobsters set in "The Worst Place in America." No social niceties or cucumber sandwiches (without the crust) here. If profuse swearing, nudity, prostitution, drugs, wildly irresponsible and largely consequence-free criminality, and cowhide-printed décor offend your fragile sensibilities, don't play it.



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Knight red and blue, as a caterwaul of sirens spread emergency and discord like banshees over a bloodied battleground. Yellow-jacketed employees fled for cover, while military-grade helicopters prowled the airspace overhead and spun out their searchlights and 35mm side-mounted guns. Somewhere amidst all this panic and confusion, I revved up my battered scramble and popped a 500-foot wheelie down Francis Airport's second runway, passing just under the screaming turbines of a landing jetliner and through a blizzard of fully automatic gunfire. Welcome to the Liberty City sandbox. Here's your bucket and spade. Don't play nice.

Niko Bellic (that's you, gangsta) is a Serbian veteran of the Bosnian war, a man with a murky past the colour and

consistency of month-old porridge, and a slippery grasp of 21st-century fashion. His cousin, Roman, has persuaded him to relocate to the Land of Opportunity with lurid claims of outrageous fortune, luxury sports cars and a private menagerie of well-endowed ladies. Needless to say, Roman the Big Talker is a rotten liar, with nothing but a grotty single-room apartment and a shabby, somewhat disreputable taxi business to his name. Oh, and an impressive tally of gambling debts with the local Russian thugs. All sorts of crime-flavoured hilarity ensues, as Niko must negotiate his way through the grimy ranks of Liberty City's underworld, in search of personal redemption, the increasingly elusive American Dream, and two hundred 'flying rats'. It's like one of those late '80s prime-time sitcoms, but with a lot more guns and

NAG
MUST PLAY



NAG
EDITOR'S CHOICE



PAINTING THE TOWN RED

Basically a scaled-down version of New York, Liberty City puts every other city seen in every other game ever to shame. Taking a midnight roll through the glitzy neon gauntlet of Star Junction in Algonquin, the dingy hooker-trawled lanes of Broker, or the biker gang-occupied Burger Shot just off the western side of the Dukes Expressway, the city exudes a gritty and utterly convincing credibility on an entirely unprecedented scale. Planes fly overhead, self-appointed street evangelists bawl conspiracy and condemnation, cops chase bag-snatching perps through the streets, belligerent drunkards piss in the alleyways, and reckless motorists bend fenders at congested intersections. And once you've gawked at all of that, you can plough down the sidewalks in a stolen fire truck, and smear innocent pedestrians all over the tarmac.

KEEPING IT REAL

GTA4 is the first game to feature NaturalMotion's dazzling new Euphoria animation engine. Instead of predefined sequential animations, characters' actions and reactions are generated contextually and in real time. The result is an occasionally disarming illusion of reality. Fire a gun in the posh suburbs of Meadow Hills, for example, and the country club snobs are likely to run away screeching. Try it in the seedy housing projects of Bohan's Fortside, however, and you'll probably find yourself on the business end of a local's knuckles very quickly. Passengers in a hijacked vehicle will sob and plead dramatically, and attempt to escape the vehicle at any likely opportunity, while some of Liberty City's more resourceful citizens will snap a picture of you on their cellphones and contact the police if you so much as shove a hot dog cart into a pensioner. Passers-by will tug umbrellas or bits of folded newspaper out of pockets if it starts raining, chatter to one another, or brawl in the parking lots. Curiously enough, Michelle will happily go out with you on a date to the cabaret even if your car is on fire the entire time. Maybe she thinks that's really romantic or something.



It gets

As Good As



Every game you've ever loved, rolled into one

Kinda like



PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB



Bottom Line

Visit Liberty City. Get into trouble.



I'M IN UR SANDBOX RUININ UR MOODZ

After laying obsequious flattery and extravagant promises of jam doughnuts upon Michael's sacrificial altar, I was given the *GTA IV* review with the stipulation that, in the interest of so-called "professional integrity" or some other imaginary nonsense, I point out ten bad things about the game. Here are six. (I'm confident this minor shortcoming is nothing in the wake of my failure to produce the promised doughnuts.)

1. The cover system isn't up to par with some of its peers and suffers occasional stickiness, and the target lock-on can be a tad obstreperous ("I want to shoot HIM, not HIM!"). The function that moves Niko between two spots of cover doesn't always work quite as it should, and there's none of that roadie running we all hearted so much in *Gears of War*.
2. There's no clock on the main HUD: a particular nuisance when you're running errands against time, and an inexplicably stupid oversight on Rockstar's part.
3. Several missions require you to chase down a fleeing target. These can be immensely annoying, especially when the nearest vehicle is three blocks away, and it's a dump truck.
4. The AI is occasionally an aneurysm-inducing cretin. When I want to change cars before the ominously smoking SUV I'm driving explodes and turns us all into Swedish meatballs, I'd appreciate it if everyone - that includes you, Derrick, you bumbling Irish peasant - relocates to the replacement vehicle instead of flapping gormlessly around the street amidst the rapidly swarming riot trucks and landing us all in prison. I hate you, Derrick.
5. The checkpoint system can be lousy. Some missions may take as long as half an hour or more to complete, and failing just before cinching your final getaway only to have to restart from the very beginning is grossly unjust. Especially when it's through no fault of your own. I hate you, Derrick.
6. Friendship management becomes a hassle. While you can suspend story-based missives using your phone's Sleep function, other characters will continue to badger you with unsolicited social invitations with scant regard for your plans to jump off the top of Rotterdam Tower, mug joggers in Middle Park, or go hunting pigeons. I don't want Roman nagging me to play darts with him when I'm doing more important stuff like robbing banks and crash-landing helicopters into the Charge Island overpass and trying desperately to outrun the six-star wanted rating I inadvertently triggered while out practising my back stroke in the Humboldt River. It's not that I don't like you, Roman, it's just that I'm sort of busy right now, so stop getting stroppy and docking points off our relationship score. And was it really necessary that I haul your sorry arse to and from each social event? While it's not really an issue initially, it quickly becomes a tedious chore when I'm living in Algonquin, and have to shuttle back and forth across the islands because Bruce wants to ogle boobies in Bohan. The guy has his own bloody helicopter. He should use it more often.



ORGANISED CRIME ONLINE

GTAIV features some 15 online multiplayer modes, with support for up to 16 Web goons in both adversarial and co-operative scenarios, including ranked and unranked varieties of Team Deathmatch, kindergarten-style Cops 'n' Crooks, and the gangland, objective-based Turf War. There's also an open sandbox Free Mode, where players can just do whatever they like. Let's base jump off the Statue of Happiness and splat through a helicopter's rotors. Hooray! Somewhat scandalously, however, there is no split-screen or LAN play. Hiss, scorn, boo. Bad Rockstar! Bad!

death and stuff than *Perfect Strangers*.

Of course, most of you probably know all of this by now, and you're only reading this review to see if NAG is going with Metacritic's unprecedented average score of 99/100, or if we're going to rebel against all this disgraceful fanboyism and tell everyone that it's a totally rubbish game and we totally hated it. Because, actually, the only reason anyone reads a review is to either:

- (a) Affirm that they made a worthy purchase, and may now tell everyone they know that they made a worthy purchase because the highly qualified¹ professionals at NAG said so; or

- (b) Reinforce any usually pre-existing aversion to a game, so they may now tell everyone they know that it's not worth buying because the highly qualified¹ professionals at NAG said so; or
- (c) Disagree with the review on principle, because they know better than those highly qualified¹ professionals at NAG.

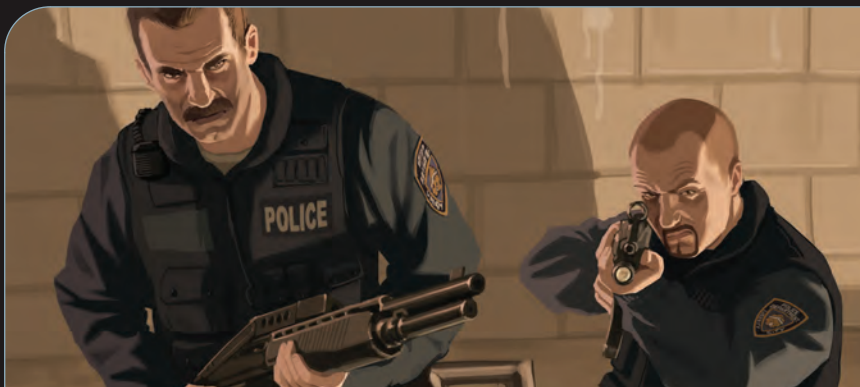
But enough prevaricatory verbiage. *GTA IV* just f*****g rules. The game cost a reported \$100 million to produce, and it shows. The next-gen just got now, and we're riding shotgun. With a shotgun.

Reviewer: Tarryn "Breaking the law" van der Byl

¹We all have honorary PhDs, with double majors in Stuff and Other Stuff. I made them with crayons and macaroni.



Take me to the candy shop, I
wanna lick your lollipop



Grand Theft Auto IV is one of those games that people talk about around the water cooler at the office (well here at NAG anyway). Here are a few words we overheard from three different people. Just imagine that they're all standing around a water cooler talking about their favourite *GTA IV* experience. This isn't television. Not working? Okay, ignore the scene setting and just read the words.

Tarryn: Drunk driving in Liberty City is oodles of fun. Especially when you've racked up a three-star wanted rating, and it's all coming to a thrilling conclusion somewhere in the middle of Broker Bridge. The car Roman and I had nicked with all the cheery optimism of the exceptionally inebriated was a twisted wreck, and the police had closed in around us. Roman was shot and collapsed to the ground, but not willing to lose the unregistered arsenal tucked inside my coat, I decided to bail over the side of the bridge. To my bleary surprise, two intrepid officers plopped noisily into the water behind me, and paddled to a nearby sandbank to continue shooting and demanding my immediate surrender. After wrestling the brazen pair to the ground with an AK-47, I swam for a nearby jetty, acquired a new vehicle, and made my final escape – all the while wondering what had befallen my luckless cousin. Just as I was parking my car outside the safe house in Bohan, Roman called. "Cousin," he whined, "I'm at the emergency room. Will you come pick me up?" Extraordinary contingency development at its finest.

Michael: My first game of *GTA IV* was just a quick try in the boardroom before heading home. It wasn't supposed to be a game-playing experiment, just a quick look. It ended up being a chain-reaction experience that showed me just how epic this game was going to be. I emerged from my safe house and walked around a little. Liberty City looked huge so I hijacked a car (some old, nondescript dark-coloured thing) and proceeded towards the sunset or rise (can't be sure). Sure enough, I drove over some people, smashed a few cars and tried to suppress the grin forming on my face. This was fun. After beating up a bum for no reason I eventually made my way to the seaside (I love the sea, so when I play games such as this I always take time to visit the beach). The water looked appealing and there was a boat cruising just offshore.

I wondered if I could hijack that boat... A few minutes later I was contemplating sailing off into the distance, just to see what happened (you know like Jim Carrey in *The Truman Show*), but I was distracted by what looked like a full-sized jumbo jet flying overhead. Amazingly, it has just taken off from a fully functional airport. I set sail for the airport. I just had to get closer to one of those things. Soon I was on the beach again, heading towards the runway, curious to see what would happen if I got close enough to the jet wash when a 747 takes off. There was a concrete block with a sign on it that I was trying to read. Next thing, four police cars, a S.W.A.T. van and a police helicopter were upon me. I didn't last long... I guess those Americans are still twitchy about terrorists.

Regardt: This one time, in Alderney, I was in a fierce rocket launcher shootout with two other players on an Xbox LIVE multiplayer deathmatch. We kept running around a three-block radius and every now and then, a random player would show up, usually driving a car like a homicidal maniac. Not long after the shootout started, the 5-0 showed up, trying to break up the gunfight and dodge the rockets now headed their way. Eventually, a few more players showed up and they all directed their attention to the stream of 'po-pos' filling the streets. Even though this was not a team deathmatch, in that moment of unified anarchy, we stood together like brothers in arms trying to keep the fuzz off our tail. About two minutes into this epic battle, I realised that teamwork wasn't really for me. While almost every other player in the game was focussing on the 'po-pos', I quietly hijacked a nearby fire truck, drove it in the direction of the ensuing shootout and bailed out a short distance from warzone. As the fire truck thundered closer to the other criminals, I launched a rocket. It was a bloodbath but the sound of Queen's *One Vision* coming from the car behind me made it almost poetic. **NAG**



UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT

SOME GAMES (AND OTHER entertainment media) receive mixed reviews. What this means is that individual reviewers give it the thumbs-ups or thumbs-downs. What you are about to read here is a review that is very mixed within itself. What does this mean? That there are aspects of this game that I love and others that I hate. What a shame!

THE GOOD

The back-story is a fantastic sci-fi yarn about the arrival on Earth of a very hostile alien race, the Hierarchy. These aliens have an archenemy, the robotic race known as Novus. Novus are long-time enemies of the Hierarchy, which wiped out the Novus's creators. One biological entity of Novus has been recreated from genetic samples and the like, and she is a major character in the story and causes some emotional conflict within her pre-programmed brethren. Novus pursues the Hierarchy to Earth, and engages it here, pretty much disregarding humanity, which is sorely beleaguered by these highly advanced alien forces using our home as a boxing ring. To add to all this, a third race, the Masari, reappear on Earth, having been hidden for millennia in the sunken city of Atlatea. It turns out that the Masari have experimented with creating other races, and both the Hierarchy and humans are among their creations. They must now team up with one of their

creations against another. The story is presented with an emphasis on characters, and there is some humour thrown in, such as when General Moore (who looks suspiciously like George Clooney) is repeatedly referred to by the Masari prince as "General Peasant."

The three factions handle resources in different manners. The Hierarchy and the Novus both harvest raw materials from structures in the environment (such as buildings, cars, telephone poles, etc.), with the Hierarchy also being able to reap civilians as raw resources. To offset this slight advantage, the Hierarchy's resource gathering is slightly more vulnerable to disruption. The Masari, on the other hand, harness matter and energy directly, and require the building of structures to generate resources. This has the advantage of making them independent of on-map resources in the long term, but means that early game resource management is tricky and easily disrupted.

The three factions play satisfyingly differently from each other. The Masari can build anywhere, and have a fairly traditional tech structure. The Novus are also fairly traditional, but their buildings require power, so their bases need to develop accordingly. The Hierarchy is somewhat new: the unit production facilities are not stationary buildings, but rather massive walking factories, which can carry weapons and all

sorts of other upgrades, and are formidable, if slow-moving, assault units in their own right.

Visually and artistically, this game is breathtaking. The three factions have very distinctive looks, with the Hierarchy coming across as brutishly industrialised and mechanised, the Novus being sleekly super-advanced, and the Masari featuring a look reminiscent of Aztecs crossed with Conquistadors, with a dash of magic sparkle thrown in. From an aural perspective the game impresses: *Universe at War*, in my opinion, boasts some of the best, most atmospheric and immersive sound effects to be heard in any game to date, as well as an excellent soundtrack containing heavy metal pieces (mostly Hierarchy), techno strains (for Novus) and New Age melodies (accompanying the Masari).

The single-player campaign is handled in a novel way. As has become typical (in most cases, barring notable exceptions – yes, I'm looking at you, *Tiberium Wars*!), the three factions play out sequentially, with each side gaining ascendancy for its moment in the limelight. However, when the third scripted segment (Masari) is completed, the game format changes to a 'global conflict' mode. Here, the map of Earth is divided into territories, with each faction seeding an area, and it is up to the player to retake the planet. Individual battles can be won or lost without affecting the overall outcome, though



UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT (360)

Graphically, the 360 version of *Universe at War: Earth Assault* is not as impressive as the PC version, but it introduces a few interesting control-scheme innovations. Holding down the right trigger expands the mini-map, which lets you pan the view fast by moving the right analogue stick. Giving direct orders on the mini-map is done by moving the left analogue stick and pressing A to make units move to the cursor. The left trigger functions as a multipurpose command option, which brings up a ring-select menu that lets you activate the special abilities of selected units or directly access your technology and build queues. If you have different types of units selected, each ability is an option on the ring menu, so you can easily access many different actions from one menu. It's not perfect, and *Universe at War* is hardly the poster child for what an RTS on the console should be like, but it does enough to make the game perfectly playable - as long as you can ignore the comments from puritan RTS players who demand nothing less than a 101-button gamepad (keyboard) and an input rodent (mouse). That aside, *Universe at War* is a run-of-the-mill RTS with a few nice bits (such as the Global Conquest mode) and some interesting ideas in terms of race design and skill sets.



influencing the difficulty of subsequent efforts. This effectively 'marries' the traditional linear campaign with a non-linear strategic mode.

THE BAD

Sadly, however, for all that the game has going for it, it suffers from some serious issues and oversights. Most of these reside in the user interface. For starters, players have a unit cap of 90 (which is adjustable - downward!), while there are units in the game that consume up to seven slots! This, in my opinion, is a serious counter-evolutionary step. It is obvious that Petroglyph (the developer) meant for this game to be heavy on micromanagement of units, particularly with the inclusion of leader units (much like *WarCraft III* heroes, but without experience gain), but the limit that has been set is often too low, particularly for Masari players. Furthermore, as a micro-intensive game goes, *Universe at War* also falls rather short of the mark, and here is where the interface is woefully inadequate. There is no sidebar or command bar of any sort, as we have seen in all previous major RTS titles, so it is not possible to pick out individual units other than directly from the on-screen fray, and that can be tricky when they are milling around and often have numerous graphical effects

obscuring them. When a group of units is selected, a series of icons appears at the lower left, giving access to their abilities, but there is no way to select individual units of a type. Furthermore, the ability hot-keys use a very non-intuitive system that requires a player to remember a dual-keystroke for each ability! Other contexts don't even feature hotkeys at all.

Implementing other developers' good ideas is a tricky situation. Where do you draw the line between functionality and plagiarism? Is it better to copy a good interface idea and gain its functionality, or sacrifice that functionality in the interests of 'originality'? In general, it is best to copy. Take, for example, the "Select all units of type, across screen or across map" function in *Command & Conquer* games. Once a player is used to this shortcut, it becomes invaluable, and not having it or an analogue available is a serious shortcoming. Another much-missed hotkey is selecting all combat units across the map. Also missing is any way to shape the formation of ordered units at a designated arrival point (or anywhere else, for that matter), which is a must-have in modern tactical and strategic games. Of course, it is possible that some of these functions are actually present in the game, but there is zero documentation detailing the interface in the manual!

In closing, I must say that I thoroughly

enjoyed this game as a single-player experience, but I found it tragically lacking in multiplayer, which for many will mark its death knell. The multiplayer deficiencies seriously mar this title's replay value. **NAG**

Alex Jelagin

An actual alien invasion



McDonald's - tasty but not very filling



Bottom Line

While great fun in single-player mode, this game's multiplayer component is deeply flawed.



PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB



DARK SECTOR

AFTER A DELAY OF several years since it was first announced, Digital Extremes has finally released its highly anticipated third-person shooter, *Dark Sector*. You play as Hayden Tenno, a US Special Forces operative, sent to the fictional war-torn nation of Lasria in the USSR, charged with the task of hunting down and eliminating a man by the name of Mezner, who is in the process of unleashing a devastating biological weapon on an unsuspecting world. The particular virus that Mezner has developed has the unique property of inducing a variety of transformations in those it infects, turning some into mindless zombies, while imbuing others with abilities far beyond those of mortal men. As per his job description of embattled hero, Hayden routinely becomes infected with this very virus during the course of his first mission, and it is the transformations yielded by the virus that lay the foundation for the unique aspects of *Dark Sector's* play dynamic.

The most significant factor that sets *Dark Sector* apart from other titles in its genre is undoubtedly the glaive, a round bladed weapon that sprouts from Hayden's arm and can be tossed around like a boomerang. Through the course of the game, the

glaive's abilities grow, eventually allowing Hayden not only to throw it with sufficient force as to slice enemies in two, but also to manipulate it during flight using an ability known as Aftertouch. The glaive, though it can be used in close-quarters melee combat, is of greatest use during flight. Once the Aftertouch ability has been gained, it becomes a fairly simple matter to guide the glaive around corners, using it both to pick up objects as well as to target and despatch distant enemies. The game also allows you, at points, to guide the glaive into environmental objects that, for a short time, imbue the glaive with elemental properties, such as electricity, fire and ice. This not only allows you to slay enemies in a particularly gruesome and satisfying manner, but is also necessary for overcoming the occasional environmental puzzle that hinders your progress through the game's ten levels.

Of course, the game could hardly be called a shooter if it didn't feature a reasonable array of firearms, and *Dark Sector* provides a sumptuous arsenal of guns for the bullet-hungry. For the most part, Hayden typically wields a pistol, though the game also offers a reasonable selection of shotguns (which feel surprisingly

powerful), rifles, submachine guns and the like. Weapons can be purchased and even upgraded, using cash found in game at any of the many Black Market depots that are located beneath the city. Unfortunately, the price of illegal weapons tends to be quite prohibitive, and even by the end of the game, you're unlikely to own more than a couple of well-upgraded weapons.

While it's indisputably entertaining to run around the levels massacring hordes of fairly intelligent enemies with the ridiculously powerful glaive, there are a few areas in which *Dark Sector's* play dynamic feels just a little lacking. On the odd occasion that he's backed into a corner and forced to engage in melee combat, many of Hayden's attacks frustratingly miss for no apparent reason, leaving him open to nasty counterattacks. The boss fights also leave much to be desired: the challenge tends not to lie in the actual combat, but rather in figuring out each boss's specific weakness, after which it becomes a simple and unrewarding matter to defeat them.

The other significant deficiency that *Dark Sector* exhibits is in its story telling. Although the basic premise isn't necessarily weak, the game doesn't go to any great lengths



to maintain its narrative. Characters are introduced and twists revealed, but the story just isn't cohesive enough to make the player care about any of these. The few cut-scenes there are do little to explain any of the back-story, or even to provide a coherent explanation for whatever events have just occurred.

In terms of its multiplayer offering, *Dark Sector* provides two varieties of play. Infection sees one player controlling Hayden, while the other nine assume the role of generic guards tasked with bringing him down. The other mode, known as Epidemic, splits players into two teams, each captained by a single Hayden, with the objective being to eliminate the other team's leader. Although the multiplayer modes are fairly enjoyable in small enough doses, one wonders why a mode wasn't included to give everyone the privilege of playing as the powerful lead character simultaneously.

Visually, *Dark Sector* is mostly quite impressive. Supporting high-definition output at 720p, the environments are detailed and the lighting effects convincing, at times even awe-inspiring. The dark and moody atmosphere of the title is well conveyed by the ominous and sinister ambience of the

levels. Less exceptional, however, are the too-bland character models, and this becomes particularly apparent in the thankfully infrequent cut-scenes. Most of the enemies, with the exception of a few boss characters, are just too generic to evoke the kind of terror that they were intended to. Satisfying sound effects and competent voice acting (Michael Rosenbaum, better known as *Smallville*'s Lex Luthor, is cast as Hayden) are complemented by a sufficiently moody score to make the experience all the more immersive.

Dark Sector is certainly not without its flaws: unpolished melee combat, underwhelming boss encounters and a lacklustre storyline that does little to lend meaning to the action all contribute to make this title far less remarkable than it could've been. However, where *Dark Sector* does succeed, it does so soundly. It's a thoroughly entertaining, gruesome and enthralling combat experience that does well to make players feel like they're in control of a devastatingly powerful character. If you're looking for something with a gripping and compelling storyline, *Dark Sector* is going to leave you feeling quite unfulfilled. If, on the other hand, you're just looking to cause some bloody and widespread mayhem, and have

fun doing it, you won't be disappointed. [Well, this is why we're here after all, Ed.] **NAG**

Adam Liebman

Kinda Like

For Fans of

Gears of War

Bloodshed

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

Bottom Line

Enjoyable, brutal action title, hampered by its lack of a cohesive plot.

78

OUT OF 100



ASSASSIN'S CREED: DIRECTOR'S CUT EDITION

IT SEEMS THAT RELEASING games on next-generation consoles before the PC is becoming the trend. This is probably a good thing. It lets publishers cash in while the developers spend more time on the PC versions, which often represent bigger problems in terms of developing (that nasty 'specification' thing rears its ugly head yet again). Inevitably, though, the better titles do make their way onto PC, just as *Assassin's Creed* finally has. Thanks to the late release, the developers have added a few extra bonuses to the game as well.

For those who don't know, *Assassin's Creed* tells the tale of Altair, an assassin operating in the Holy Land in 1191 AD. Smack bang in the middle of a Crusade, which adds the fuel to this potentially fiery game. As Altair, the player needs to assassinate a number of key people to advance the story. Okay, it's actually a bit more complicated than that, but we don't want to alert the spoiler police. Each mission is comprised of two basic components: finding stuff and killing people. To both ends, Altair is a capable assassin, able to move undetected through cities, should the player be smart enough to take advantage of the dynamics that allow for that kind of action. While it is tempting to slap leather and lay waste to

vast numbers of the population at most times in the game, this kind of behaviour invites trouble (and trouble, inevitably, gets Altair on the wrong side of dead). Therefore, it's better to follow the stealthy, sneaky, through-back-alleys-and-over-rooftops route.

To allow this, the developers have done two things: they have made Altair a very physically adept character, and they have made the controls laughably simple. Altair can run, jump, dash, roll and climb with the best of them, and all the player needs to do is making use of a series of context-sensitive controls to achieve fantastic stunt sequences. The controls are perhaps a little too simple at times, but when you're hoofing it through Jerusalem with half the Crusader army on your heels, complicated

controls are not exactly what you're looking for. Thankfully, Altair is capable of hiding and blending with crowds, actions that, if executed at the right time, will save his skin more often than not.

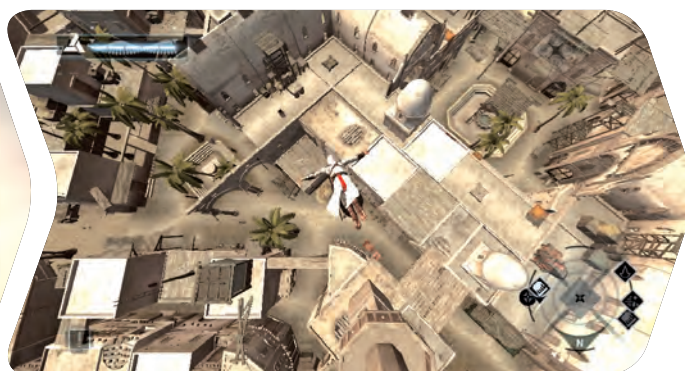
When things do come down to a fight, though, combat can be a little tricky. A good understanding of the control scheme (which basically works on a puppetry system, with a button for each hand, the feet and the head) helps, as does good timing. However, it's quite easy to get overwhelmed and taken down in the game; discretion is most certainly the better part of valour in this title.

Aside from beautiful visuals and massive environments to explore (not to mention the realistic crowd reactions to your character's activities), *Assassin's*

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

As the character progresses through the game, new weapons and abilities become available. Altair's full arsenal comprises of a long sword, a short sword, a hidden blade and throwing knives, all of which feature their own unique techniques and fighting styles. The hidden blade, for example, allows a stealthy assassination, while the sword is an all-out brawling device.





THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU'RE AN ASSASSIN

There is plenty to keep the gamer busy in *Assassin's Creed*. Apart from the main missions, players also need to undertake sub-missions (which augment their ability to complete main missions successfully). Additionally, there are objects to collect, enemy classes to defeat and points of interest to discover. This game will keep you busy for a long time. Other activities include collecting flags in the five regions in the game and assassinating templar knights.



Creed brings an intriguing and interesting story to the table. It could be considered a little predictable, but is still worth playing through.

So how does the PC version compare to those on the next-generation consoles? It's a tough one to answer, but when all is said and done, the PC version of the game requires a really punchy machine that may not be the most common desktop gaming rig around. Anything less than the recommended specifications affect the gameplay, which is very visually driven. The added mission types for the PC version are fairly similar to those seen before, and don't do much to mitigate the high specifications that the game requires. If your computer can handle the game, then great. If not, you may want to consider playing it on a machine that isn't a slave to specification issues, such as an Xbox 360. Playing it on a lower specified machine is

possible, but it does the game absolutely no justice at all.

Was it really necessary to release a PC version of this game? Another tough question, but the answer would be probably not. Aside from a number of PC gamers who steadfastly cling to their prejudices, most people would have experienced this game on the Xbox 360 or PS3, both versions that are as good as, if not superior to, this belated PC version. The controls on the consoles are far more intuitive and easier to cope with, although connecting a gamepad to your PC will take care of that. Using the default mouse and keyboard control scheme is simple enough, but it still feels a little clunky compared to what a gamepad can deliver. The mouse makes for a better camera-control device (maybe), but this still doesn't trump other control options.

The additional sub-mission content

make a fairly good argument for the PC version, but the game already features so much to do without them that they are almost pointless clutter latched onto an already full title.

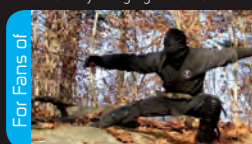
It's not an unwelcome release, though, and those who have waited for it shouldn't be disappointed. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

Yet another cloned FPS



Stealthily bringing the smack down



Bottom Line

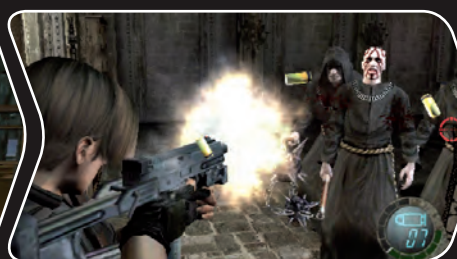
A good game, but one that is not necessarily better on PC than on console.



PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

Better Than

For Fans of



RESIDENT EVIL 4

IT'S 2005, AND LEON Scott Kennedy has quit the Raccoon Police Department. Not really all that surprising, given that the office was likely obliterated when the city was destroyed by a missile/three missiles/a tactical nuke disguised as a missile (depending on which documentary game you want to believe). But job security isn't a problem when you're a great, strapping blonde protagonist, and Leon soon finds himself re-employed as a secret agent by the US government – and with what fortuitous timing, because the president's daughter has managed to get herself abducted by an insidious cult she probably found on MySpace. Our hero is promptly sent to Spain to retrieve the errant brat, only to find himself entangled in some sort of mad conspiracy not covered by his travel-insurance scheme. Then there are a whole lot of disgruntled Spanish peasants with chainsaws, gross stuff erupting out of people's heads and a midget villain with a curious penchant for Elizabethan fashion.

Now, I am on an evangelical mission. I want you to play *Resident Evil 4*. So instead of a predictable dissection of control schemes, version differences, save points and other tedious, inconsequential stuff, here are five reasons why you are going to love *Resident Evil 4* to itty-bitty bloody pieces:

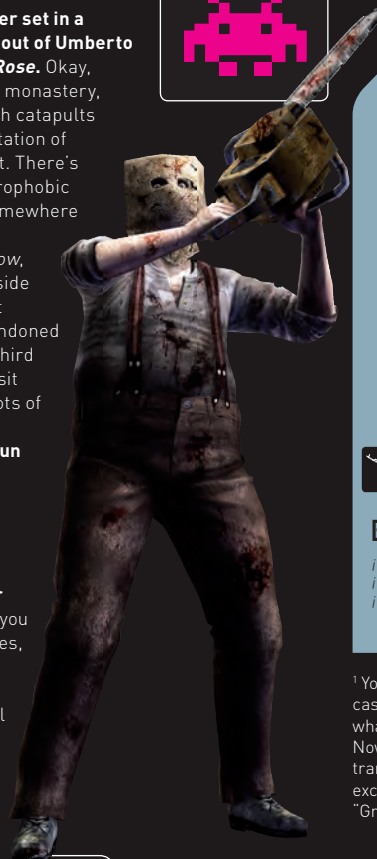
- 1. The bosses will die without incurring any of those instantly regrettable controller casualties.** There's no inscrutable top-secret method to killing *Resident Evil 4*'s bosses. Just keep shooting them until they fall over. Just like real life. **Epic rating: 9/10**
- 2. There are people wearing sacks on**

their heads and brandishing chainsaws. That's right. It's your own personal early '80s B-grade slasher film, and it's on the business end of your Wiimote. Interactivity just got sexy.

Epic rating: 9/10

- 3. There's an entire chapter set in a castle cribbed straight out of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.** Okay, so it's a castle and not a monastery, but it's full of monks with catapults and a bold new interpretation of the Fifth Commandment. There's also a fly-blown, claustrophobic village slowly rotting somewhere between *Children of the Corn* and *Apocalypse Now*, and a ramshackle cliff-side military installation that might have been an abandoned set from the second or third series of *The X-Files*. Visit scenic Europe and kill lots of stuff. **Epic rating: 9/10**
- 4. A fully pimped-out riot gun will rip through several enemies with one meaty splat.** Did you read the previous sentence? **Epic rating: 9.5/10**
- 5. The best headshots ever seen in any game.** When you land lead between the eyes, there's this marvellous streak of red stuff, and the luckless recipient will collapse to the ground in a soggy tangle of limbs. But that's not all! The corpse will go on to

**NAG
MUST PLAY**



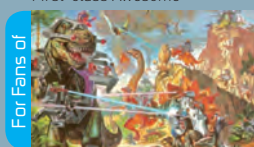
ooze blood with a merry sort of "pprrstt ssspprrstt" sound as blood continues to dribble out of the chunky remains of its neck. **Epic rating: 10/10**
jCogedlo! **NAG**

Tarryn "Oh, just use the rocket launcher" van der Byl

A holiday in rural Spain during peasant-hunting season



First-class Awesome™



PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB



Bottom Line

jCogedlo!
jCogedlo!
jCogedlo!

96
OUT OF 100

¹ You've played the game, you've done the castle sightseeing tour, and you've wondered what those creepy monks were whispering. Now, thanks to the herculean efforts of the translation squad over at NAG HQ, we can exclusively reveal that "jCogedlo!" means, "Grab him/it." See what we did there?

grand theft auto **IV**



Now On Xbox 360®

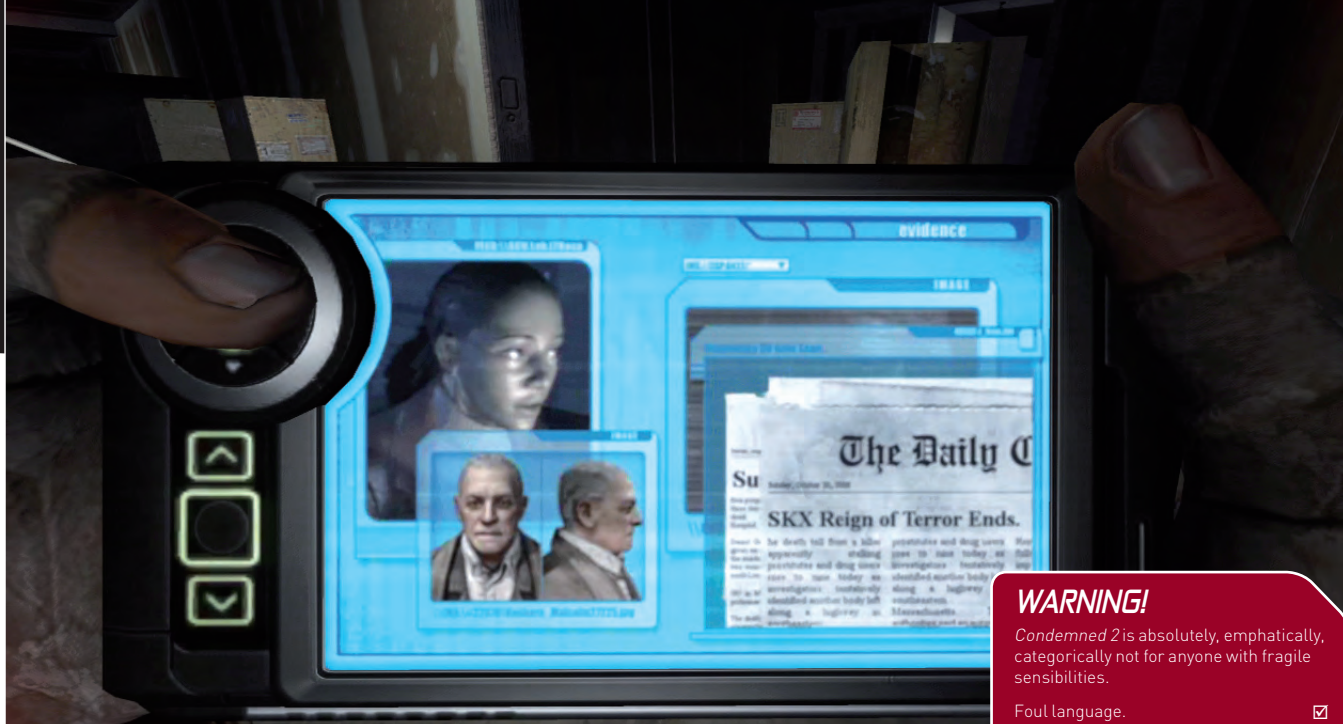


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Jump in.

 **XBOX 360.**



CONDEMNED 2

YOU'LL HEAR THE EXPRESSION banded about with reckless abandon, but actually feeling your skin crawl is a sensation reserved for perhaps only a single experience in an entire lifetime. And you'll know it as the real thing when it finally happens, because it's just so totally unlike anything you've ever felt before. It's like being covered in rats.

Now, the good news for those of you gripping this page with a sweaty, fevered merger of lust, envy and awe, and thinking, "But I want to be covered in rats too!" is that you can. Just play *Condemned 2*. There's a moment about two hours in that'll have your skin booking tickets on the next express train to Far, Far Away. That's a fully endorsed NAG Guarantee™, and it's almost reason enough to buy this game. But wait, there's more.

Condemned 2 picks up about eleven months after the events of its predecessor (although no knowledge of these events is assumed or even necessary). Our protagonist is the somewhat shabby Ethan Thomas, a former FBI Serial Crime Unit agent now plumbing the murky depths of full-time professional alcoholism. When his mentor, Malcolm Vanhorn, is murdered in the sort of grotty, derelict hotel that looks like it smells of crack pipes and hobo wee, Thomas is grudgingly persuaded to rejoin

the SCU and track down the killer. If this paragraph were a film trailer, this is where the soundtrack would strike a minor key, and the voice-over adopt a subtly deeper register, and intone something predictable about Thomas "taking on more than he bargained for," his "past coming back to haunt him" and "the revelation of an ancient conspiracy that threatens to shake the very foundations of civilisation as we know it." There'd probably be a few of those flashed images that last longer on your retinas than the actual screen, showing maybe a rabid bear, a winter-bound alpine retreat that looks remarkably like the Overlook Hotel from *The Shining* and a gang of burning dolls that are clearly up to no good.

All of this is just superfluous fluff, however. *Condemned 2* is about brawling with homeless thugs. Most of the stuff lying strewn about the game's grimy locations can be picked up and used to brain people. Yes, there are guns, but guns are so dull when you can use a gumball machine or deer antler instead. And just when you're bored of hitting things with spades and chair legs, you're bestowed with a magical power that lets you scream and make people's heads explode.

It's so awesome. **NAG**

Tarryn "I ain't afraid of no mannequin" van der Byl

WARNING!

Condemned 2 is absolutely, emphatically, categorically not for anyone with fragile sensibilities.

- Foul language. ☒
- Questionable morality. ☒
- Creepy, hallucinogenic sequences. ☒
- Gross, dissected animals. ☒
- Totally gratuitous violence, including at least one messy decapitation. ☒

A series of torture chambers with some of the most disturbing imagery you've ever seen, including human and animal victims in varying stages of very explicit... err, discomfort and about 50 litres of red stuff slopped over the walls.

So, basically all the best bits of *Jacob's Ladder*, *Se7en* and the *Hellraiser* series rolled up into one big, dripping, raw meatball that you can shove into your Xbox or PS3 and play.



TRAILER ON THE DVD

This all happening in real life [OMG, that would suck]

Better Than



PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

For anyone



Who has ever dreamed of being an alcoholic thug



Bottom Line

You can bludgeon hobos to death with prosthetic limbs, bowling pins and bricks. Do you really need to read the review?



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DAS GRÖSSTE OPFER.

METAL GEAR SOLID 4

GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION



A VIDEO KONAMI GAME

Handwritten signature

18



PLAYSTATION 3

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LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

ORIGINALLY RELEASED OVER A year ago for the Xbox 360 and already ported to the PC, Capcom's third-person shooter *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition* has finally made its way to the PS3. Shipping with all the bonus content, including extra multiplayer maps and character models, which eventually became available on the other platforms, one would expect the PS3 version of *Lost Planet* to be the definitive one, but despite its extra year in production, it's still just a little rough around some of its edges.

The game is set on an icy, almost Hoth-esque planet called E.D.N. III, earmarked by humans for colonisation. Standing in their way is a native race of carnivorous insects known as the Akrid, as well as a large intergalactic corporation called Nevec, seeking to terraform the planet for their own nefarious purposes. Players take on the role of amnesia-stricken Wayne, who has to battle the threats of insect and man alike, all the while trying to avoid a nasty death at the hands of hypothermia.

Lost Planet's play dynamic is unique in that the game incorporates both on-foot combat as well as vehicular combat, courtesy of the game's own exclusive brand of mechs, known as 'vital suits' or VSs. Although the VS carries more powerful armaments and can sustain quite a bit of damage before going down, it's less agile than traversing the 11 levels that comprise the single-player campaign on foot. The game offers you freedom in choosing how you play,

and part of the fun is in figuring out which strategy to adopt for any particular mission.

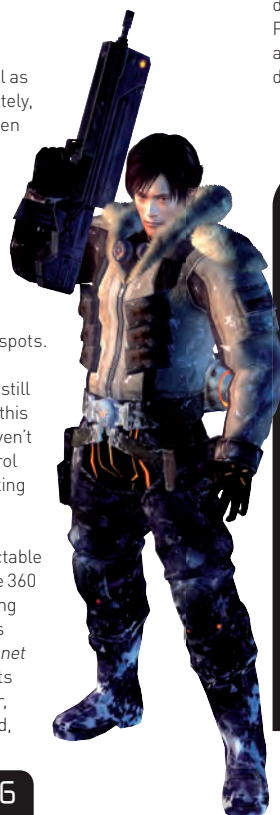
Whether in a VS or on foot, Wayne has a 'thermal energy' meter that continuously drops, reflecting the severity of the environmental conditions on E.D.N. III. Thermal energy (T-Eng) is required to maintain the VS's power supply, as well as to keep your health up on foot. Fortunately, the substance is dropped by Akrids when they demise, giving the player some incentive to continuously fight off enemies in order to keep the energy meter up long enough to reach the level's boss fight. The bosses are quite intimidating and the battles rather enjoyable, as one tries avoiding being killed by each mission's boss long enough to discover its weak spots.

Unfortunately, despite all the things *Lost Planet* does right, a few things are still wrong. Despite the substantial delay of this version's release, the problems still haven't been rectified. In addition to some control issues that make it difficult and frustrating to target airborne foes, there are a few disconcerting instances of slowdown during big fights. The inclusion of collectable medals that unlock achievements in the 360 version of the game do absolutely nothing in this version. Making matters worse is that visually the PS3 version of *Lost Planet* is inexplicably inferior to its counterparts on other platforms. Textures are fuzzier, character models are blocky and jagged,

and the visual effects aren't authentic.

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition certainly isn't a bad game. It's an interesting concept and a fairly enjoyable shooter. It's just disappointing that after such a long wait, the PS3 version still has all the bugs of the PC and 360 versions, as well as being visually disappointing. **NAG**

Adam Liebman



Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2

PC
360
PS3
Wii
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

Worse Than

For Fans of

Console shooters

Bottom Line

Enjoyable PS3 action port hampered by shoddy visuals and unfixed bugs.

68
OUT OF 100

AGE OF CONAN

HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

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...JUNE 2008

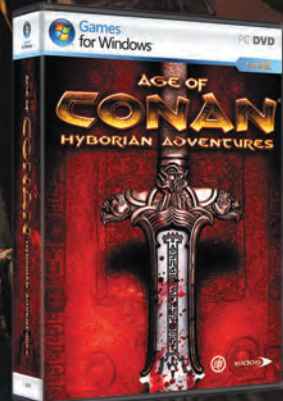
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TRAILER
ON THE DVD

BOOM BLOX

STEVEN SPIELBERG AND EA have created *BOOM BLOX*, a game that is fun, easy to play, and so addictive that your arm will hurt for weeks afterwards.

BOOM BLOX is, at its core, a simple puzzle game that involves breaking down three-dimensional 'building-block' puzzles. This destruction ranges from careful (pulling blocks out of the structure without the whole thing toppling over) right to downright brutal (flinging a virtual bowling ball at a tower of wooden blocks laced with explosives). The game features a short tutorial that will even have novices playing within a few minutes.

Not that the game is easy. Initial levels are quite simple, sure, but the later challenges are maddeningly frustrating, and a slight miscalculation on the part of the player can result in countless 'retries'.

The game features several modes. In single player, Explore and Adventure modes provide the player with several puzzles (the distinction between the two being that Adventure-mode puzzles are story driven

and generally have a time limit imposed). Advanced versions of these modes can also be unlocked.

BOOM BLOX is also a gem in multiplayer. Competitive and cooperative games abound. Some of them can be played with just a single Wii Remote (a sort of 'puff-and-pass' principle), while others require more than one controller. *BOOM BLOX* is a great party experience, because the game is so easy to learn and the control scheme is wonderfully intuitive. When balls need to be thrown, a throwing motion is used. When blocks need to be pushed or pulled... you get the picture.

To top it all off, an easy-to-use level editor is included with the game, allowing players to create challenges of their own.

While *BOOM BLOX* is aimed at a younger market, the complexity of the game and its sheer addictiveness will appeal to everyone. It's the most unique puzzle game we have seen in years, and anyone who owns a Wii should be playing it. Its game dynamic and controls are excellent. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



NAG
MUST PLAY



Jenga

Better Than

Breaking stuff

For Fans of

PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

There are many ways to skin a cat, or, more accurately, blow a block tower to smithereens. A variety of balls, ranging from baseballs to bowling balls, all have different effects, while fire hoses, ray guns and six-shooters provide a more direct plan of attack. Some puzzles require a different approach though. For these, tools that allow blocks to be pushed, pulled or repositioned completely are also available. All of these tools can be unlocked (as well as a variety of different building blocks) for use in the game's level editor.



Bottom Line

BOOM BLOX is the most original puzzle game in years, and a perfect way to spend time with your Wii.



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TIME CRISIS 4

NOTIME! THAT'S A crisis! If you've ever seen the *Time Crisis* series in an arcade, the premise is familiar: you use a light gun (also known as a 'light fun' to some) to shoot bad guys before your time runs out. Shooting certain enemy types gives you more time and there are background elements you can shoot to gain yourself precious seconds. The fourth instalment in the series (not counting two spin-offs), appropriately named *Time Crisis 4*, has now reached the PlayStation 3 after serving in arcades since 2006.

Time Crisis introduced a few innovations to the light-gun genre, the most well known being that you automatically hide behind cover after moving up to it in typical on-rails, light-gun style. Pressing down on the pedal (arcade) or button (console) will make you pop out so you can shoot. Ducking back reloads your gun, so none of this 'shoot off the screen to reload' stuff. The ducking element makes for a lot of dynamic action, breaking up the action into some thrilling situations such as popping out behind enemies that have walked by. Another series-specific feature is the multi-weapon, which lets you switch between four types of weapons while ducked. The gun, machinegun, shotgun and grenade launcher all have specific applications and are each best suited for certain situations.

As is usual for the series, only 'special units' can really hurt you. Regular guys just impede your progress, which is bad since the game isn't called *Time Crisis* for nothing. You need to complete your mission before the timer runs out.

It's pretty much a perfect arcade port (which explains the dated visuals) with a host of new features, including wide-screen support. The main new addition is the 'Complete Mission' mode not found in arcades. It's a specially made, first-person shooter mode where you not only aim and fire with the gun normally, but you also have to use the two analogue sticks on the gun to move, strafe and aim your view. It actually felt like a bit much, though this may be a personal preference thing.

There is a slew of content that can be unlocked and ample shooting range-style mini-games for one or two players, complete with online rankings.

While there isn't anything intrinsically wrong with *Time Crisis 4*, being an arcade port, it does suffer from some strange design choices. The GunCon 3 seems overly complicated considering the casual nature of the usual light-gun game, and the visuals just don't hold up very well. The FPS mode is a hit-or-miss affair, with our guess being more on the miss side. **NAG**

Miktar "HotD" Dracon



G-CON 3

It's bright orange, plastic and a bit bulkier than usual. The analogue stick stuck to the side is the main reason for the bulkiness, and the G-Con 3 has a ton of buttons everywhere (two by the left stick, two by the right, two more down the barrel and of course the trigger), which make you feel like you need a third hand. The unit calibrates using two LED sensors you hang/place atop your screen (a bit like the Wii Sensor Bar). The sensors have a long cable that plugs into the USB port on the PS2 and a wire between them of about half a meter. Each sensor has a little strap with some counterweights, so you can hang the sensor over a thin LCD. With thicker screens, you can just place the sensors on top.

A LITTLE TO THE LEFT... TO THE LEFT

Southpaws may want to note that the GunCon 3 was designed for right-handed people.



Better Than

Worse Than

Time Crisis 3

House of the Dead 3

PC

360

PS3

WII

PS2

PSP

DS

MOB

Bottom Line

This is one for fans of the series or light-gun games.

69 OUT OF 100

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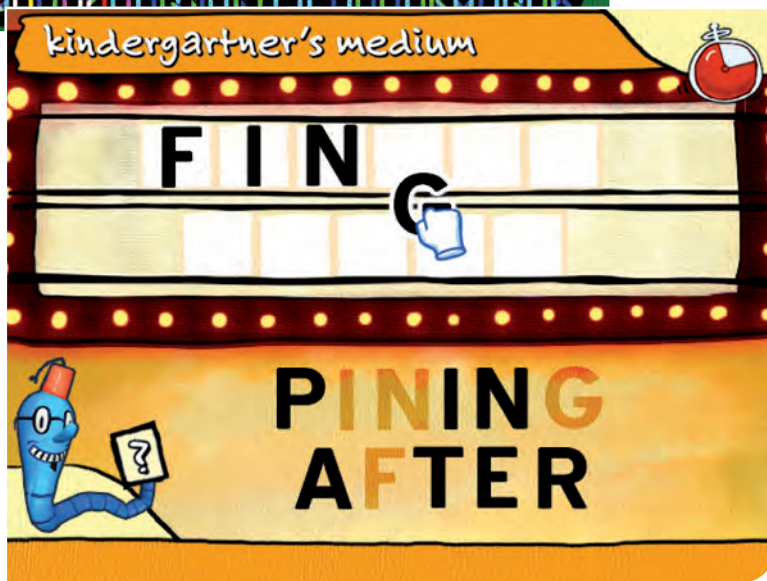
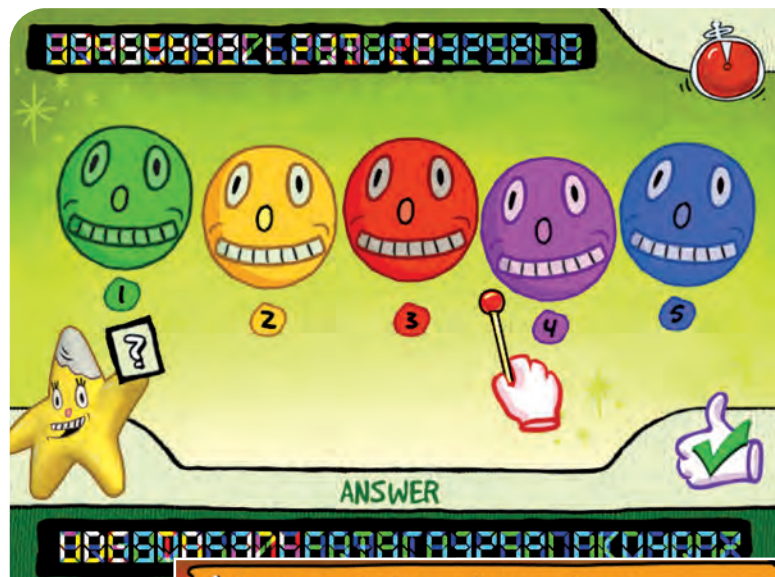


PLAYSTATION 3



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CRANIUM KABOOKII

MANY YEARS AGO, BEFORE my days of dizzy international celebrity superstardom as a NAG freelancer, I was a university student. And like most other students, I had a really rubbish, criminally underpaid part-time job at a local toy shop. Now, when we weren't busy apprehending rascally toddlers trying desperately to abscond with Yugi-Oh cards stashed in their short pants, the shop did a blazing trade in a board game called *Cranium*. Somewhat resembling Ludo and billed as "The Game for Your Whole Brain", *Cranium* is a party romper featuring a mash-up of mini-games like *Pictionary*, *30 Seconds*, and *Trivial Pursuit*.

Cranium Kabookii, the *Cranium* franchise's first digital excursion, is very much the same brand of family-flavoured fun. There are fifteen mini-games on a sort of carousel selector, spun with a flick of the Wiimote, whereupon a troop of eerily hallucinogenic critters scuttles out and introduces the next event. This farcical charade is repeated for another 40 minutes or so, until one of the teams accumulates 25 Running Man tokens and flings chips and

sneers in giddy triumph.

I was fully prepared to hate *Cranium Kabookii* with fire and polysyllabic behemoths, but following an afternoon spent wrangling errant blocks in *Jenga: World Tour* with a mounting fury the size, shape, and general temperament of Vesuvius on Pompeii Day '79, its soothing crayon colours and charming beasties dressed as spacemen seemed, well, soothing and charming. For the most part, the controls are responsive although players may occasionally find the Wiimote a tad obstreperous in the Cameo and Talkback Cameo challenges. Load times spin out at around five to ten seconds, which feels somewhat excessive when most mini-games are only a minute or so in length, and flipping past the instruction screen the twelfth time a Songpong event is slotted soon becomes tedious. Although the game is more or less playable with two participants, it really wants four, and six is probably the unofficially recommended roster if you're going to grind the game for maximum XP. **NAG**

Tarryn "Braaaaaaaains" van der Byl



THRILLS, SPILLS, AND NEUROSURGEON'S BILLS

Cranium Kabookii's brain-box bogglers include several activities where a team representative must demonstrate or recreate something for their comrades. The Graffiti and Cloodle events, for example, task the appointed champion with drawing an object, whose true identity the remainder of the team must breathlessly guess at. In order to avoid those no-peeking pre-event scenarios where someone invariably peeks (you know who you are), a red-lens Decoder Mask is bundled with the game. Using some sort of impenetrable occult sorcery, this cardboard artefact unscrambles the otherwise entirely illegible instruction appearing onscreen. Astonishing!

The board game, sort of



The board game, I suppose



Bottom Line

Droll fun, if occasionally somewhat exasperating.



PC
360
PS3
WII
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

competition

On the NAG DVD this issue, you'll find **TrackMania Nations Forever**. This is a free, extreme-racing game developed by Nadeo and was released on the Internet in May. The game is well known for quick, lag-free, online racing, but is really famous for its imaginative tracks that defy physics, gravity and reality. The game also ships with a track editor, so aspiring designers can put together their own racing arenas. So, if you'd like to win a copy (we have **five**) of the game TrackMania United Forever, which is the bigger brother of Nations Forever, plus a PC game controller then send your original track to **ed@nag.co.za** and we'll test it at the NAG office and decide which five are the best. We'll also put all of these NAG reader tracks on the next DVD. The deadline for submissions is **1 July 2008**.



Thanks:

We'd like to thank Apex Interactive for the prizes, as well as Chris, Miktar and Michael for cooking up a few sample tracks to get you inspired.

Technical:

Once you've completed your track, make sure you validate it (try and set a decent time) and give it a suitable name. On Vista machines, your track can be found here: <your name>/documents/trackmania/tracks/challenges/my challenges/. For XP it's in My Documents.



PS2 OWNERS REJOICE!

It seems that someone out there realised that PS2 owners still want more PS2 games! If you've been eyeing out the recent PSP release catalogue and wished you had a PSP, be sad no longer. Both the excellent *Wipeout Pulse* and highly entertaining *Daxter* will be appearing on the PS2: *Pulse* sometime in September and *Daxter* next year. With the recent release of *Silent Hill: Origins* and *Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters*, it seems that the PS2 ain't out of the race just yet. We wouldn't be surprised if *God of War: Chains of Olympus* appeared on the PS2 sometime next year.

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

RRP→ R549 | Publisher→ SCEA | Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Games | Genre→ Action/Platform | Age Rating→ 7+

RATCHET & CLANK is all about upgrading your weapons and celebrating diversity. In *Size Matters*, and while on vacation no less, Ratchet manages to find new types of armour that give him abilities if he has the full set. These abilities include being shrunk tiny enough to squeeze through keyholes, upgrade his weapons simply by using them and even going inside his robot buddy, Clank, to speak to Clank's security chief (who looks suspiciously like Barney Fife). Clank on the other hand gets to Robot Royal Rumble, pretend to be one of many Lemmings, command other robots, turn into a giant Super Clank and blast through space... pretty standard stuff for a vacation.

High Impact Games (who spawned from the original developer, Insomniac Games) developed *Size Matters*. It's a celebration of everything that makes the series so entertaining: tons of action, a little puzzle here or there, humorous dialogue and a surprisingly deep experience in spite of the graphics looking a little dated, even compared to recent PS2 *R&C* titles. In fact, fans of the series who've yet to buy a PlayStation 3 will no doubt find *Size Matters* a fun game, as it's a proper *Ratchet & Clank* title in practically ever regard. And now it's on PlayStation 2 as well. **NAG**

Miktar "Cheesy McSqueeze" Dracon

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

Exactly what PlayStation 2 owners (and fans of *R&C*) have been waiting for.



ATV OFFROAD FURY 4

RRP→ R549 | Publisher→ SCEA | Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Games | Genre→ Racing | Age Rating→ 3+

THERE ARE RACING GAMES aplenty on the PS2, and the *ATV Offroad* series is a stalwart of the genre. *ATV Offroad Fury 4* could have been the best of the bunch (although that is a bit of a dubious distinction). It has everything needed for a fun if somewhat arcade-like racing title. Customisable outfits, upgradeable (and tuneable) vehicles and a host of tracks in both the single-player campaign and multiplayer split-screen modes await the player, plus a few more features that really make for a potentially great game. However, when these 'good' elements are combined with a finicky control system, an unforgiving track structure and opponents that never, ever mess up, the game just gets silly. For example,

cutting a corner ever so slightly might result in a stiff penalty, a slight steering miscalculation can send you from first place to last, and opponents never fall off their bikes (even though the player's character gets knocked over by a slightly stiff breeze).

There's nothing worse than being slammed by an opponent, being knocked off your bike and seeing him speed past. The customisation is fun and all, but it hardly makes the game more enjoyable. Being able to paint your bike virtually any colour you like doesn't make up for the fact that it handles pathetically on overly long, harshly designed and just plain nasty tracks. Patience is needed if you insist on playing this title, but it's the

kind of legendary patience that people who build card houses (without cheating with bits of sticky stuff) have. The game's definitely not worth the frustration. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

It could have been a great game, but it's not.



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PLAYSTATION 3



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NARUTO: UZUMAKI CHRONICLES 2

RRP→ R399 | Publisher→ Bandai
Distributor→ Megarom
Genre→ Action/Adventure | Age Rating→ 12+

THE NARUTO ANIME SERIES has a huge following the world over. It is therefore small wonder that there are almost as many *Naruto* games as there are *Naruto* episodes. They tend to be full of colourful characters, as well as the very annoying Naruto himself. Prejudices against the little git aside, this game is actually quite a lot of fun, offers a variety of things to do and has an action-adventure single-player mode and a more traditional multiplayer fighting game.

In the single-player mode, the player is faced with a number of short mission sequences, interspersed with long anime-style movies and tons of loading times.

This game really is a mixed bag. The single-player campaign features a weak plot and is quite bland, with tons of button mashing being the order of the day. The multiplayer game, though, is well worth the effort, with a 3D arena providing the backdrop for a fun experience.

Fans of the series will certainly love *Naruto: Uzumaki Chronicles 2*. Others may want to try it before they commit. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

Fans of anime will undoubtedly love this game.

72
OUT OF 100



THE SIMS 2: KITCHEN & BATHROOM INTERIOR DESIGN STUFF

RRP→ R199 | Publisher→ EA
Distributor→ EA South Africa | Genre→ Simulation
Age Rating→ 3+ | PC Spec→ 1 2 3 4 5

YET ANOTHER SIMS 2 expansion has hit the shelves, although it is part of the seven, non-essential Stuff Packs. Then again, tell a *Sims* addict that the Stuff Packs are non-essential and you're likely to get punched in the face. All those hours of babysitting *Sims* could make anyone violent.

As their name implies, the Stuff Packs contain, well, stuff. New items, clothing, decorations and the like are crammed into these packs. As the name further implies, this particular pack will help *Sims* fans design kitchens and bathrooms that look more like designer efforts and less like tacked-together, rush jobs.

If you are a *Sims* player who takes things casually (an unlikely kind of creature, considering the *Sims* fans we have met over the years), treat this as an entirely optional product. It does nothing to change the game dynamic. If, however, you are a rabid *Sims* addict who has to have absolutely everything so that vicariously living through your virtual family is just so much better, you'll want to get this. After all, who can resist a stylish, all-black bathroom with a new shower design and a wall-mounted toilet? **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

A non-essential expansion that is, if you are a *Sims* fan, essential.

77
OUT OF 100

VICTORIOUS BOXERS CHALLENGE

RRP→ R299 | Publisher→ Ubisoft
Distributor→ Megarom | Genre→ Sports
Age Rating→ 16+

MANY SPORTS TITLES ARE perfect for the Wii, but few are as tailor made as boxing simulations. Armed with the Wii Remote and the Nunchuk, players can bash away at opponents to their hearts' content. *Victorious Boxers Challenge* proves it, and the game dynamic of this rather unassuming title is addictive and fun. It's possible to button-mash (or more correctly, wildly flail) your way through the game, but a little practice and a tactical approach work well too. The motions for hooks and uppercuts are a little bit unrealistic, and trying to perform too accurate a motion will confuse the game a little, but this can be worked around. Special moves are also available, and they are really easy to master.

The problem with the game is its anime overtone. There's nothing wrong with anime, but cheesy anime is nasty. And the anime in *Victorious Boxers Challenge* is of the blue cheese variety, so it's nastier than most.

There's nothing difficult about this title, and the ease with which it can be picked up makes it a great party game. Two-player drunken brawls will never be the same again. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

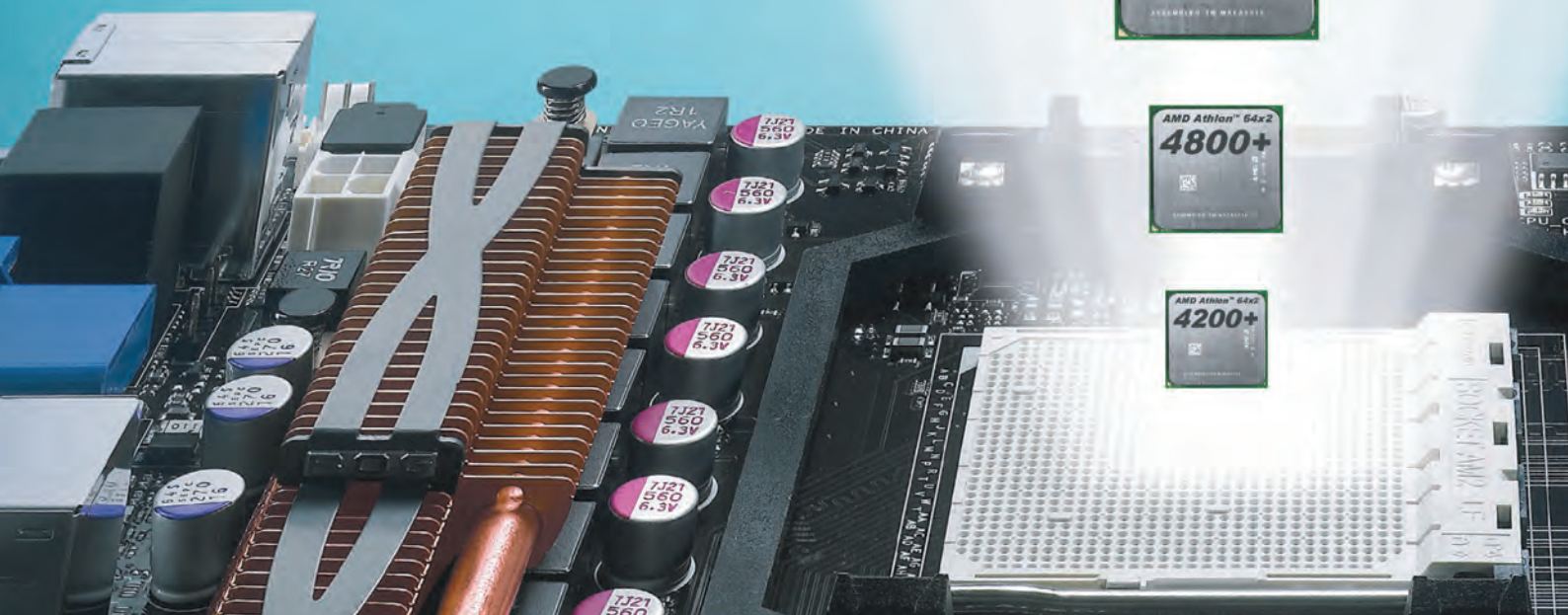
A fun boxing simulator, if you can get past the nasty anime feel of it.

79
OUT OF 100

ASUS Crosshair II Formula Instant CPU Upgrades with Just a Click

ASUS Exclusive CPU Level Up for Easy Performance Boosts

Wish your computing performances can be easily upgraded without extra costs? Then ASUS' latest cutting-edge motherboard, the ASUS ROG Crosshair II Formula, can show you how. This powerful piece of hardware supports AMD® Socket AM2+ Phenom™ FX / Phenom X4 / Phenom X2 / Athlon™ X2 / Sempron™ and legacy AM2 processors, and comes with the exclusive CPU Level Up feature from ASUS. This allows you to easily achieve CPU boosts without the need to buy new hardware via three easy steps (enter the BIOS, choose the processor, and reboot). Once this is done, the Crosshair II Formula will now take over, and you can instantly start enjoying higher performances! This amazing technology has also been listed on the Ten Best Technologies and Trends of 2007 at the reviewing site Extremetech.



CODED ARMS: CONTAGION

RRP→ R399 | Publisher→ Konami
Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Games
Genre→ FPS | Age Rating→ 12+

CODED ARMS DIDN'T NEED a sequel. While the aforementioned sentence is actually enough to review this game, the space allotted needs a few more words, so here goes... Putting an FPS on the PSP is generally not the best of ideas, but people being what they are, *Coded Arms* has been granted a second lease on life with *Coded Arms: Contagion*. This is a title with more than a few problems. It is cliché ridden and features rudimentary and entirely boring levels. However, great action could get past all that, if great action had been an element of this game. It isn't.

Using a control scheme that uses the PSP's analogue stick to move, and face buttons to look around (right shoulder to shoot, left shoulder to jump), precision aiming is, well, not really an option. To make things easier, the D-pad has a target-lock function, and the AI has been scaled back significantly, leaving the player with opponents that couldn't hit the broadside of a barn with a shotgun at five paces.

The game does feature a nice upgrade system for weapons and equipment, but the rest of it - from stupid opponents to laughably simple mini-games for 'hacking' - is a chore to play. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

It's better than the original *Coded Arms*, but that's not really saying much, is it?

55
OUT OF 100



METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS +

RRP→ R259 | Publisher→ Konami
Distributor→ Ster Kinekor Games
Genre→ Action | Age Rating→ 16+

THE ORIGINAL PSP RELEASE of *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops* brought a great game to the pockets of many gamers. It was interesting, intriguing and featured a really deep and meaningful plot. So there was some anticipation as the PSP spun up that title's sequel, very imaginatively called *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops +*. What we found is a game with no depth, no plot and missing all the good bits from the previous title.

As a standalone expansion (if you can wrap your head around that), this title allows you to import characters from the previous game, or play it just as is. The game consists of endless, randomly generated missions that require different goals to be achieved, depending on the whim of the software. Through these missions, the player gets to build up an army of up to 200 soldiers (which is pretty impressive) with which to undertake missions. However, the missions get tedious before long, and the overall point of the game seems to be missing. There is no real plot. The most interesting text-based interactions that the game features are in the tutorial. The controls get a bit too complicated at times as well. Fans may enjoy this, but only real MGS fans...

NAG
Walt Pretorius

PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

A very weak sequel to what was a great game.

68
OUT OF 100

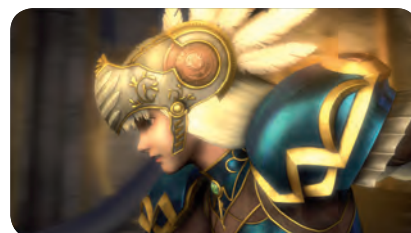
VALKYRIE PROFILE: LENNETH

RRP→ R299 | Publisher→ Square Enix
Distributor→ Nu Metro Interactive
Genre→ JRPG | Age Rating→ 12+

ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED FOR THE PlayStation and called *Valkyrie Profile*, it has since been ported to the PlayStation Portable. Its graphics and control interface are rather dated, but these aren't the elements that one should look for in this game. If you are looking for fast-paced action, look elsewhere. This game will keep you busy for weeks, or even longer! In fact, after about eight hours of playing, I began to wonder whether I was still in the prologue.

The game is based on Norse mythology, wherein Valkyries - serving as 'angels' for Valhalla, the Norse afterlife - fetch the souls of great warriors in preparation for Ragnarok, the end of the world. Don't expect cutting-edge graphics or sound, though the game's presentation does convey heavy emotional overtones quite successfully. Combat is typical JRPG fare, if rather simplified, and consists of a rudimentary turn-based dynamic. Overall, this game fills a niche, and is therefore difficult to rate. If I were to do so purely according to my own personal preferences, it would receive a minimal score. However, its artistic style, sense of drama, as well as the fact that it offers many, many hours of entertainment for fans, redeem it and lend it a certain minimalistic elegance. **NAG**

Alex Jelanin



PC 360 PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

A very slow-paced game that will challenge the PSP's battery life. Recommended for fans of *Final Fantasy*.

65
OUT OF 100



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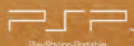
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CARTESIAN CHAOS

WHEN MIKTAR ASKED IF I'd take over this review, I agreed on the naive assumption that a game called *Cartesian Chaos* was probably a point-and-click adventure game, starring 17th Century French philosopher René Descartes in a Lovecraftian mystery, maybe with a bit of added methodological scepticism, a sawn-off blunderbuss, and off-road kart racing or something. Not quite, as it turns out. While the game does have monsters (yay, monsters!), it's mostly all about teaching the fundamentals of graph mathematics. Now, what Miktar doesn't know is that I failed Grade 9 maths, and promptly dropped the subject altogether in favour of standard-grade geography with the remedial kids and a nice box of crayons. I can dissertate the grammatical ramifications of Finno-Ugric inflectional morphology with ponderous academic authority, but I couldn't solve x if my immortal soul depended upon it.

Trashy straight-to-DVD, teen-flick hilarity ensued, and although I didn't end up going to the senior prom with the cutest boy in school, I did buy myself a Nintendo Wii.

Anyway, there are three play modes to tug your cerebral cortex: Quick Quadrants, What's the Point, and Define the Line. Your mission is to defend the Cartesian plane's origin (that's the middle bit, I finally figured out) from an rapidly overwhelming monster assault by solving the quadrant, coordinate, or line formulae whirling around each

critter's head. Correctly solving the problem summons a lightning bolt of death to scrub the luckless assailant from the board. Blitzkrieg! There are also six collectible power-ups, including a Radial Blast and Descartes' Doom Device, which you'll desperately need as the apocalyptic legions become increasingly devious the longer you play. Actual equations may occur.

In addition to three comprehensive tutorials and a free-play arcade mode, there are 48 challenges spanning four difficulty levels on the roster, including score-, time-, and frag-based targets. I fumbled my way to seven gleaming trophies, one of which was for a medium-rated challenge. My parents wept with pride and bought cake.

It's edutainment, yes, but it hasn't not only brought maths and electrocution together into one convenient, pocket-sized package (at last!), it's accomplished something the dastardly Mrs Hilton-Taylor hadn't managed in an entire year – *Cartesian Chaos* taught me maths. Well, quadrants and coordinates anyway (line formulae still rupture blood

vessels behind my eyeballs).

I'd recommend this not only to maths-challenged students, but also to anyone who can't get enough of those relentlessly compelling, brain-boxy PopCap games like *Bookworm Adventures*. **NAG**

Tarryn "x=lolwut" van der Byl

LOCAL VARIABLE

Cartesian Chaos was developed by RetroToast Studios, a local enterprise based in Johannesburg. The game was recently awarded first place in the Game.Dev community Competition 15, and some sort of glittering prize from Mindset Learn.

Mrs. Hilton-Taylor's maths class

Better Than

Worse Than

Maths, Monsters, Electrocution

PC
360
PS3
Wii
PS2
PSP
DS
MOB

Bottom Line

Hard sums. Brain asplode.

75
OUT OF 100



Samsung 2232GW Monitor

image quality so real,
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Q&A: CARTESIAN CHAOS

Cartesian Chaos. It's the maths game that teaches you stuff while you kill stuff. If only they'd thought of this sooner. We threatened Cadyn Bridgman and Louis Pieterse with a line formula, and made them answer our questions.

1. Your technical specifications, please.

ET: In the realm of the Internets, I go by the name of Evil_Toaster. Otherwise I tend to be Cadyn Bridgman. I, along with one Louis Pieterse -

LP: Alloo...

ET: I run RetroToast Studios, a South African game development company dedicated to the art and creation of silly games. Also involved is Daniel Petroff, who created much of the art for *Cartesian Chaos*. Interested parties are encouraged to visit www.retrotoast.com.

2. How did you become involved in game development?

ET: It began back in the days when graphics were so bad that a single pixel could make the difference between a machine gun and a rabid chipmunk. I'm not even sure what possessed me to play them, yet I did. I first began tinkering with games in high school, thus embarking on a highly successful career creating games that didn't work. Some were less games and more 'retarded tank doing the mambo across the screen'. I'd often hamstring myself by being overly ambitious. (A trap many prospective game developers fall into.) Only recently did I get my act together. The Game.Dev competitions provide convenient constraints which encourage you to take on manageable projects.

LP: I have been involved in computers in one way or another, basically forever. I never thought it would go any further than pizza and beer on a Friday night, but here we are. Even though I take every challenge seriously, I was shocked when FFS won comp 10 and it encouraged me into thinking



bigger. With *Forrest Gump*-like persistence we have found that the long way around can often lead to success.

3. We saw you at rAge a few years ago, winning stuff for some sort of mad game about burgers in space. What was that all about? Is it still around?

ET: *Fast Food in Space* was far more than just burgers, I'll have you know! There was also pizza, chicken, ice-cream and lobsters. The game was, in some small way, about taking obesity to the next level. You know how your classical 'grey' aliens look anorexic? I don't know what they eat, but I'm sure it isn't pizza. In the game, you are given the noble task of tempting aliens into giving you money in exchange for making them fat.

LP: The commercial version is due sometime this century!

4. We're up to our eyeballs in planetary colonisation, pangalactic war, and

unreasonably belligerent aliens. But interstellar junk food? It's time for you to confess that you stole the idea from *Space Quest III*.

LP: No, we were hungry and upset about the fact that we had to fight traffic for our thick base and double-cheese fix... If only we had a spaceship and a pizza joint in orbit, we'd be set!

ET: Liars! As evidence I present exhibit A, which is a snippet of the post-mortem I wrote for Dev.Mag Issue 10 in 1937:

"... the concept of fast food in space is no stranger to me. It's been sitting in the back of my head for years ever since I had an idea for a shooter game in which the protagonist is desperately trying to defend his killed-by-pirates parent's fast food delivery company from evil space pirates."

5. Congratulations on the recent launch of Cartesian Chaos. You even made the cover of Dev.Mag in November. Have you sipped



champagne from a celebrity model's navel yet?

LP: I sipped wine from a beer mug? For our next commercial game I am aiming for enough sales to convince Carmen Electra to be our booth-babe at rAge.

ET: Maybe.

6. Cartesian Chaos began its life as a winning Game.Dev competition entry that fooled kids into learning maths while they sadistically electrocuted monsters. Ingenious!

ET: As they say, inside every person who wants to electrocute monsters is another, slightly smaller person who also wants to electrocute monsters. *Cartesian Chaos* is an expression of this primal human desire, with the added benefit of allowing one to learn useful maths skills at the same time.

With Game.Dev's competition 15 theme being education, it wasn't easy coming

up with an idea. After bouncing ideas off practically everyone I knew, the concept eventually emerged when Daniel suggested clicking Cartesian points to murderise tanks that moved down the screen. Two days of prototyping and a few adaptations later, the initial version of the game (later becoming 'What's the Point?' mode) emerged on the forums. From there, the idea expanded to include the simpler 'Quick Quadrants' mode, and the (apparently) ultimately fear-inducing 'Define the Line'. It went and won the competition for us (thanks to Mindset Learn for sponsoring the prize, and dislekcia of Game.Dev fame for running the comp), which was awesomeness.

LP: I had absolutely no hope whatsoever that anyone could create a good-looking, fun game that is educational. Cadyn proved me wrong.

7. Is maths really, actually, you know, that important?

1. and 2.
Cartesian Chaos

3. and 4.
Retro Tank

5. and 6.
Fast Food in Space

LP: Without maths, there is only the lonely blinking of a text cursor that will never get to move to position 2 on the screen.

ET: *Nods sagely*

8. What's this 'guerrilla learning' thing you've got going on?

ET: I believe it originated from a group of vigilantes who reportedly would raid random schools known to contain inattentive students, and read Shakespeare to them at gunpoint. The Q&A sessions afterwards were where things sometimes got nasty. We have merely taken the concept and toned it down slightly.

LP: It's about tricking people into learning something. Like Mr. Miyagi with his famous "wax on, wax off" dribble.

9. Educational games have something of a stigma attached to them. Where's the line between entertainment, education, and dismal failure?

LP: It's easy to make education boring.

ET: I would like to propose a simple formula that states: 'The success of your educational product is directly proportional to the number of lightning bolts contained within said product'.

10. So what's next for RetroToast Studios?

LP: If an idea is fun, it's gonna happen. Our current ideas are not so much focused on education as on making things explode.

ET: I'd like to do a commercial version of *Retro Tank*, complete with supremely silly story and more explosions than is in any way reasonable. I've got a pile of great ideas floating around.

11. Your Retro Tank game was beaten by Ultimate Quest, co-produced by NAG hack Tarryn "Azimuth" van der Byl (with Claudio "Chippit" de Sa) in Game.Dev Competition 16. Your tyrannical Game.Dev tyranny is at an end! But seriously, on a scale of 1 to 10, how frickin' rad was Ultimate Quest?

LP: 10 obviously... Game.Dev Competitions aren't for sissies ;)

ET: I still have spots in front of my eyes from the supermarket, and the "lick sheep" command was indeed formidable.

12. Solve for x, and show your working.

$$x^2 - 6x + 4 = 0$$

LP: $x =$ the reason why the chicken crossed the road

ET: What do you think I am, a mathematician? Besides, didn't anyone tell you it's blasphemy to put maths into a gaming magazine? **NAG**

THE SPRINGBOARD

The local mobile game industry is very small compared to the rest of the world. This industry is an opportunity for game developers to make a name for themselves fairly easily, but the truth of the matter is that it is being underutilised in many ways. Aspirant developers could use the mobile-game market as a springboard to the larger sphere of game making, but many seem unwilling to. Perhaps the simplicity of the games is the problem. These are small, generally Java-based titles that don't exactly show off a developer's skill with graphics and immersive game dynamics. But, on the other hand, the simplicity leads to other challenges: creating a game that doesn't rely on high-end graphics, but rather on an addictive system [which needs to be well handled with the simple controls that are available] is as much a feather in a developer's cap as creating high-end games is.

Mobile games are also friendly on the pocket. No packaging or manuals need to be produced, and copies of the game need not be pressed. Being purely electronically distributed, these games can save a massive amount of money for new development houses.

Mobile games can certainly stimulate the local gaming development market, but what kind of support will developers get from the major service providers and smaller WASPs that distribute the games. The truth is that any of the majors would more than likely consider the inclusion of locally produced games in their catalogue, and WASPs would be to. A good product that can potentially sell many 'copies' is a worthwhile product to have, regardless of where it comes from. Securing international distribution is also not impossible and, when all things are considered, the international market for mobile gaming is very lucrative indeed.

We have seen development houses come and go in this country, and a number of independent developers have attempted at cracking the wider gaming market. Perhaps, realistically, someone should consider this avenue. With minimal development costs and relatively simple distribution forms, mobile gaming could be the thing to bounce South African developers into the international scene. Is that a challenge? Sure, why not?

NOKIA CLAIMS BEST GAME MEFFY

THE MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT FORUM'S fifth annual-awards evening, sponsored by Nokia, was hosted at a gala dinner in Cannes recently. The awards, or Meffys as they are known, are given out in a number of categories relating to mobile entertainment and the delivery thereof.

Rimma Perelmuter, MEF Executive Director, said: "A focus on discoverability, interactivity, usability and affordability were the common strands shared by this year's winners. Above all, the companies selected by the Meffys judges clearly focused on putting the consumer first; attracting and entertaining subscribers through a variety of appealing offerings including innovative new ad-supported communities and subscription-based models."

More than 200 submissions from 21 countries were considered for awards this year in what is becoming a hotly contested market.

One of the most coveted Meffys is the award for Best Mobile Game. The winner was Nokia's *Hooked On: Creatures of the Deep*. The runners up were Hands-On Mobile's *World Poker Tour: Texas Hold 'Em 2*, Konami Digital Entertainment's *Metal Gear Solid Mobile* and Pro Evolution Soccer 2008, and Player X's *Hollywood Hospital*.

In addition to the Best Game award, Meffys for Music Service, TV & Video Service,

Technology Innovation, Content and more are awarded. The goal of the awards is to drive the mobile entertainment industry to create better products and services. The high degree of competition in this sphere means that true excellence is required to garner a Meffy.

This year saw another win for Nokia, which won the coveted Handset Award for its N95 8GB, beating the Motorola MOTO Z10, the Samsung Soul SGH-U900 and the Sony Ericsson W910i.

Orange Mobile won the operator award, and the Fring mobile-Internet data application (allowing use of Skype and several other instant-messaging services on mobile) won the Best Handset Application award.



TEN MILLION SALES FOR ASPHALT

GAMELOFT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT its popular, mobile-handset racing series, *Asphalt*, has topped the ten-million sales mark, making it one of the most-downloaded mobile games in the world. Michel Guillemot, president of Gameloft, said: "Consumers around the world are able to recognise a great game, which is why *Asphalt* was able to establish itself as the most-popular mobile racing game, despite extremely tough competition. We are excited to announce that

Asphalt is now a member of Gameloft's exclusive million-in-sales club, an accomplishment it now shares with some 50 other Gameloft titles. We expect several other Gameloft brands to top the ten-million in-sales mark this year."

The *Asphalt* series was first released in 2004, with sequels in 2005 and 2006. A fourth instalment is expected this year. The series is available through 180 operators in 80 countries, in 15 different languages. It is compatible with 1,200 handsets.

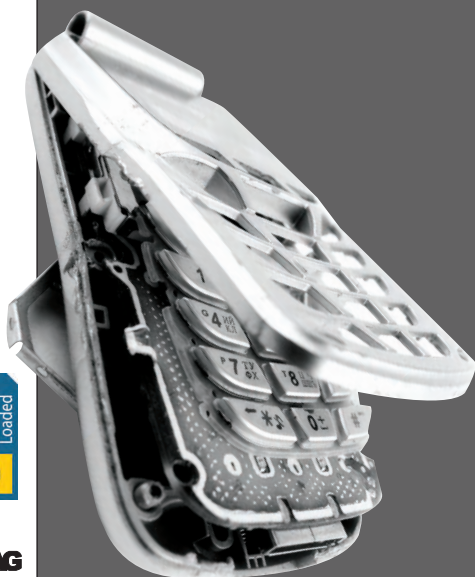


MOBILE GAME ADVERTISING PREDICTED TO BE "DISAPPOINTING"

WITH A MAJOR DRIVE towards mobile advertising underway, the possibility of free game downloads, sponsored by advertisers, is very real in the mobile gaming sphere. However, in a recent report completed by Screen Digest, analysts imply that the performance of this initiative will be disappointing.

"We are predicting a relatively strong showing in terms of the number of downloads that are free, rising up to around 60 million

downloads per year across Europe, North America, India, China, South Korea and Japan," said Screen Digest's Head of Mobile Media, David MacQueen. "Games will still be an important part of the advertising market on mobile, but the actual ads themselves - while still important for the companies involved in that sector - once mobile TV takes off, [advertisers] will see that as the more important channel."



SAMSUNG SGH-I450

RRP→ TBA
Supplier→ GGSi
Website→ www.samsung.com
Brand→ Samsung

IF YOU WERE INTRIGUED by the Samsung G800 on announcement, but were less than bowled over at the realisation that it isn't a Series 60- or Windows-based smartphone, then you will be glad to hear about the updated version called the G810. It's the G800 but Series 60 based, with all the bells and whistles added.

It isn't available yet and is likely to cost far more the i450, which is available locally. The Samsung i450 runs Symbian OS 9.2, which means that it has a plethora of software available for it, especially games.

The phone has everything that most people will ever need, such

as video calling, all the popular compressed music-playback formats and MPEG-4 video playback.

Everything is where you would expect it to be, and users will be right at home with it within minutes. The sound quality, which is what this phone is really about, isn't great with the provided earphones. However, use a midrange, third-party set, and listening to music is absolute bliss.

Navigating your music with the touch wheel is very straightforward. If you're looking for a phone that isn't too hard on the pocket but is crammed with features, you may want to take a look at the Samsung i450. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



SPECS

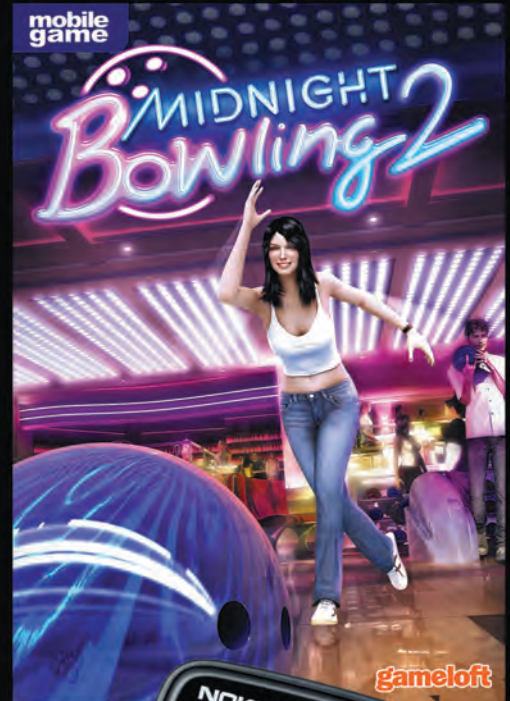
Dimensions: 101mm x 52mm x 17.8mm
Connectivity: Bluetooth 2.0, USB Data Cable
Audio/Video Support: WMA/MP3/AAC/OGG/ASF/WMV/3GP/H.263/MPEG-4
Memory: 40MB (1GB SD Card)
OS: Symbian OS 9.2 S60 Version 3 Feature Pack 1
Score: ★★★★★



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mobile



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Mobile Game: R40

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HARRY POTTER: MASTERING MAGIC

RRP→ R50
Publisher→ EA
Genre→ Puzzle
Download→ SMS Nag064 to 083 123 686

THERE ARE FEW BOOKS that have as many licensed items as the *Harry Potter* series. This game is mostly based on the films, but knowledge of the books will come in handy as well.

Quite simply, *Harry Potter: Mastering Magic* is a puzzle game, presenting eight different kinds of puzzles that test various skills. The premise of the game is that the player needs to master eight different types of magic, each of which tests a different skill: Divination, Transfiguration, Potions, Astronomy, Charms, Care of Magical Creatures, Herbology and History of Magic. The challenges range from special problems through to mathematics and knowledge of the universe created by J. K. Rowling.

You will probably get through *Harry Potter: Mastering Magic* in a few minutes. The game is rather short, but it is the kind of title that will have you constantly trying to better previous achievements. It's most certainly a cash-in on the popularity of the films, but is still enjoyable. The graphics is good, and the whole idea is quite fresh. Unfortunately, you need a very responsive phone to get good scores



in some of the puzzles. All are timed, and some require quite a lot of cursor movement to complete successfully.

It's a light-hearted and stimulating game, and well worth playing if you enjoy the kind of mental taxation that it has to offer. It has very little to do with the film and books in terms of story, rather using them as inspiration. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

A fun puzzle game that reminds of numerous 'mind power' titles.



BOOM BLOX

RRP→ R50
Publisher→ EA
Genre→ Puzzle
Download→ SMS Nag063 to 083 123 686

EA TAKES MOBILE GAMING seriously, and the 'conversions' it does for mobiles are generally top notch. This is the case with *BOOM BLOX* for mobile. Instead of trying to clone the game completely (which, let's face it, is impossible), EA decided to take the core idea and run with it. The result is a compelling and challenging puzzle game.

Unlike so many other mobile games, there is a lot to do in *BOOM BLOX*. The levels are relatively simple initially, but there are many of them, and they get rather complicated later on. As if it weren't enough, EA include a level



editor (which was quite a surprise) with the game, allowing players to create their own levels and upload them to an online community (although whether or not it will be locally supported is unclear at this stage).

All the puzzles are based on blocks that need to be eliminated from the level. There is a variety of different blocks with unique properties (more than in the Wii version, actually), and the various effects need to be activated effectively to achieve 'gold-medal' awards in each level.

BOOM BLOX is a great way to spend



some time playing a mobile game. It has lots to do, and is a lot of fun. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB



Bottom Line

An excellent and fun mobile game!



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GAMES



MY PHONE



LIFESTYLE

SMS Nag061 to 083 123 686

www.mtnloaded.co.za

Mobile Game: R50

Indiana Jones adventure game filled with dangers and whiplashes!



BRAIN TEASER



RRP→ R50
Publisher→ Vivendi
Genre→ Puzzle
Download→ SMS Nag067 to 083 123 686

HAS ANYONE FIGURED OUT what is going on with the onslaught of puzzle games? Specifically, titles in which the objective is to match three similar blocks to make them disappear. *Brain Teaser* a two-for-one special! That's right; two puzzle games for the price of one.

Brain Teaser is the title of a bundle consisting of *Slidenloop* and *Shock Blocks*.

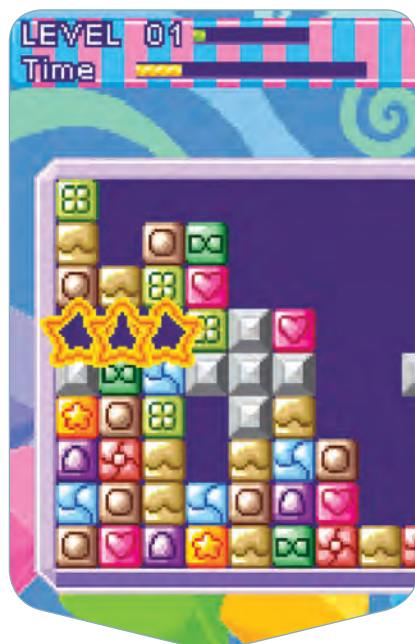
In *Slidenloop*, players follow the story of Zia, who has to recollect the pieces of a broken medallion to re-imprison an evil god. You know the drill. To do this, she must push rows and columns of items so that they match (three of a kind). Any move that doesn't result in a match means a life lost.

In *Shock Blocks*, players must nudge, flip and invert the playing area to arrange blocks to match three of a kind. To successfully finish a stage, all matches need to be completed in a predefined number of moves.

As standalone titles, *Slidenloop* and *Shock Blocks* are reasonable. However, as a package, they provide a complete puzzle experience, from casually carefree to purposefully ponderous. Of course, two titles also mean added replay value. Unfortunately, a free steak knife is not included.

NAG

Rory Smith-Belton



CRASH BANDICOOT NITRO KART

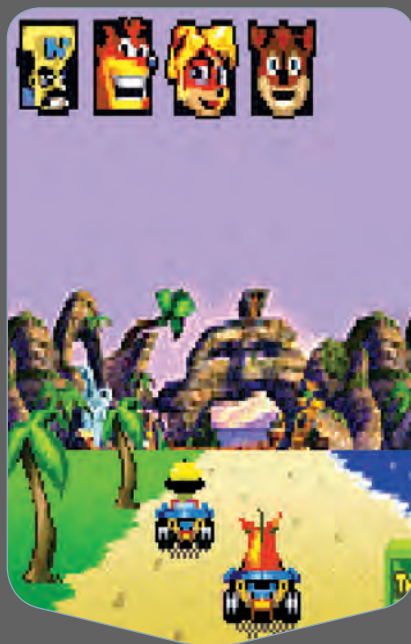
RRP→ R50
Publisher→ Vivendi
Genre→ Racing
Download→ SMS Nag065 to 083 123 686

IT MAKES SENSE FOR the *Crash Bandicoot* franchise to have its own racing title. All the cool kids are doing it and since that includes Mario and Rayman, it seems like an ever better idea. On the other hand, Darren, if your first name is Crash, perhaps driving isn't really for you.

There is plenty to be done in this dandy little title. The game launches with two play modes, two playable characters and one kart. A bit of finger-fun goes a long way though, rewarding the casual gamer with three new modes, six locked characters and an extra seven karts. Graphically, the menu screens and overall presentation got my inner child all sugared up and jumping. They're bright and bold. Unfortunately, the actual in-race sprites beat him back into submission. Then there is the horrible redraw, which creates the impression that the racetrack is only as long as your nose. Fortunately, you don't need to see which way the track turns, as the controls are more forgiving than the Pope is. Throw in a small array of power-ups for a bit of *WipEout*-styled action, and you have *Crash Bandicoot Nitro Kart* in a nutshell. Expect nothing new in this happy, but mediocre racing romp.

NAG

Rory Smith-Belton



LEGO ESCAPE

RRP→ R50
Publisher→ EA
Genre→ Puzzle
Download→ SMS Nag066 to 083 123 686

LIKE LEGO. I HAVEN'T played with the stuff in years, but the sentimental feelings it invokes may cause me to lose my objectivity in this review – it really touches my inner geek.

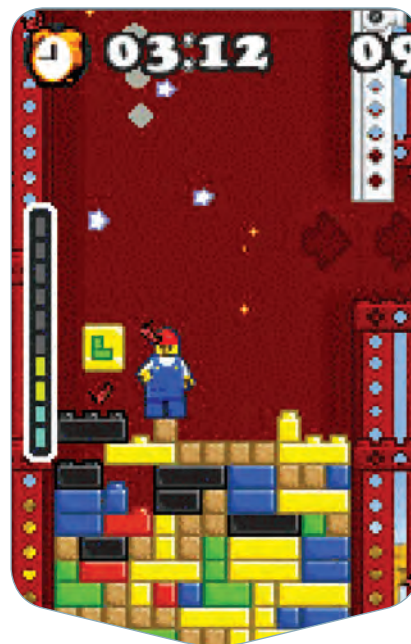
In essence, *LEGO Escape* is like *Tetris* on steroids, except that there is a man who can't stop smiling, bombs that can't stop falling, annoying robots, shoes of jumping (+1), a trowel and a stability meter. Don't forget the finicky controls. Besides all that, as well as the fact that you're trying to build rows and not clear them, it's almost exactly like *Tetris*.

Trapped in a trench of sorts, you must build a stable structure from the various LEGO bricks that descend upon you. Build high enough, and you'll be able to leap to safety only to be stuck in the next level. Should you leave too many holes in your structure, it'll become unstable and collapse a few rows. Haste really does make waste!

Be warned though, the controls aren't as easy as expected. Brick orientation and placement can be confusing and frustrating. Sometimes it's easier to simply discard an unwanted piece rather than making it fit. Still, I think *LEGO Escape* is a great variation of the block-manipulation genre. The same game without LEGO would've scored at least six points less – easily.

NAG

Rory Smith-Belton



PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB

Bottom Line
Two-for-one is good fun.

86
OUT OF 100

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB

Bottom Line
A product of peer pressure.

71
OUT OF 100

PC 360 PS3 WII PS2 PSP DS MOB

Bottom Line
LEGO can do no wrong.

83
OUT OF 100

NAG

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A BIG PROCESSOR IS COMPENSATION FOR A SMALL... ER... WHATEVER

NOT ALL GRASS PATCHES on the other side of the fence are as green as the one under your very nose. The reality set in as I listened to friends of mine chatting around a campfire during the long weekend early in May. These guys are all successful business people who enjoy toys as much as I do, and I believed that they were on the same level as me. I sounded like Jeremy Clarkson while talking about the Intel Skulltrail, shouting, "POWER!" They looked on in a slightly confused state asking why they would ever need ten teraflops of memory, two radiator tanks, four GPUs, octagon CPUs and two 1,000W PSUs. The only thing they agreed upon was the LCD TFT screen. Big is beautiful. "POWER," I shouted, and again I was given 'the eye'.

This is exactly why we have a three-page roundup of six Intel processors in this issue of NAG.

We uncover it all for you so that you may make an informed decision as to your next purchase. Read to find out if you should be going for the top-of-the-range CPU or if an entry-level CPU will serve your needs.

I didn't want to read the roundup prior to going to print for fear of me pulling the article and replacing it with smutty pictures of the inside of my case... POWER!

If an entry-level CPU takes the cherry, I'll be setting Neo's desk, car and hair on fire.

Remember to look out the July issue when do the same with AMD CPUs. And then in August, we'll compare the top Intel and AMD CPUs in a cage fight we at the office have named, "RAW Celebrity Death Match."

Thank you for your letters this month. I wish I had more space to print them all. However, I shall still be answering your e-mails. So keep on mailing. We read your suggestions and appreciate them all. Please stick to the heading 'Hardware Q&A' or 'Dream Machine' when mailing me at len.nerly@tidemedia.co.za.

Enjoy this issue.

Len Nery
Hardware Manager



ZALMAN GS1000 IS FINALLY HERE!

THIS AMAZING, AFFORDABLE CHASSIS features hot-swap SATA bays in a sleek, high-end design and is perfect for gamers wanting to mod a case.

RIDE THE MSI WIND

Soon to be released by Pinnacle Micro, the Wind (Wi-Fi network device) is a low-cost, lightweight, yet fully spec'd notebook that boasts a funky design for people on the move.

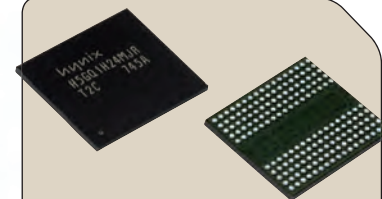
HYPERSONIC IN SOUTH AFRICA

Thanks to Syntech, the OCZ gaming notebook range is here with a bang. These pre-built notebooks offer those looking for a high-end portable gaming experience a perfect option. The OCZ gaming notebooks are powered by Intel Core 2 Duo CPUs and sport NVIDIA GPUs for running all the latest games.

Obviously, battery life will suffer due to the power consumed by these beasts.



Sponsored by



RV77XT CHIPS TO SUPPORT GDDR5

NEW FROM THE BOYS at Sapphire ATI is that AMD/ATI's RV77XT chips will support GDDR5 as well as a 512-bit memory interface. In other words, they'll be fast and furious. The launch date is set for sometime in June, with first-on-shelf stock from July onward. The superbly improved R600 memory controller easily copes with GDDR5 whereas previously it could only cope with GDDR3 and GDDR4.

GDDR4 didn't make the AMD/ATI cards any faster, hence the move to GDDR5 and thus the future of AMD/ATI cards. This definitely makes the RV770 a bit bigger than the RV670 and this will be the most significant difference between the chips.



TO FACEBOOK OR NOT TO FACEBOOK, THAT IS THE QUESTION

News just in is that Microsoft has approached Facebook in a possible takeover bid. Facebook (valued at \$15 billion) has more than 70 million users with Microsoft already owning a \$240-million stake in the company! Neither company agreed to comment, so we shall keep our ears to the ground and let you know if we hear a peep!

HARDWARE Q&A

HI, I'M LOOKING TO upgrade my PC (long overdue). What is the best way to determine the specs of your motherboard if you have misplaced all the documentation?

Anon

Hello, thanks for your mail. The easiest way is to look at the area on your motherboard between your memory and your CPU. You should see the name, for example GIGABYTE, and a model number. Simply copy all that text into Google, add a plus (+) symbol and the word "drivers."

Len

Remember, simply send in your question or suggestion to len.nerly@tidemedia.co.za with the subject heading 'Hardware Q&A' and your letter may be printed too.

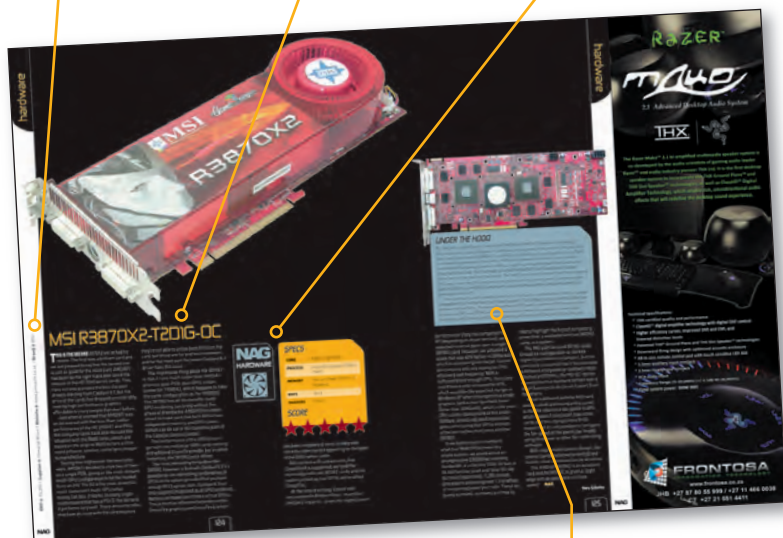
ANATOMY OF A REVIEW

A quick guide to the NAG Hardware Reviews section

VITAL INFO: Age, weight, favourite drink and sexual orientation.

PRODUCT NAME: Good to know when you wake up in bed with this hardware.

AWARDS: Check out her hot sister on the right side of the page!



DROP YOUR ROCKS AND READ THIS BOX

SPEC-TACULAR: This is where your buddy hooks you up with the nfo, yo.

SCORE: Gold-star treatment, only the best for our hardware.

SPECS	
CORE	R680 x 2 (857MHz)
PROCESS	666 million gates x 2 (55nm TSMC)
MEMORY	256-bit 512MB GDDR3 x 2 (900MHz)
ROPS	16 x 2
SHADERS	320 x 2
SCORE	
★★★★★	

NAG AWARDS

DREAM MACHINE: We have a dream. That only the best hardware gets this hot chick, waving her derriere in the air like she just don't care.

HARDWARE: Ever wonder why it's called hardware? If something has this award, then someone got hard for the ware.



HARDWARE SCORING SYSTEM

Our hardware scoring system is based on the reviewer's expert opinion. The scale is from 1 to 5 with no fractional values. Each number has a specific meaning, described below. Most products will score 3 or 4, with the occasional 5 or 2, and almost never 1. Note that a high price alone can never lower a score below 3.

- 5 The stuff of Legends. Buy it while you can, we probably already have.
- 4 A good deal; worth it if you're shopping for one.
- 3 About what you'd expect, no problems. You might want to wait for it to go on sale.
- 2 This has some issues. You should probably shop around for something else if possible.
- 1 The stuff of Nightmares. You'll probably be sorry you got one, even if it was free.

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bringer of silent death

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4000dpi



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Variable true dpi setting adjustment
Always-On™ mode



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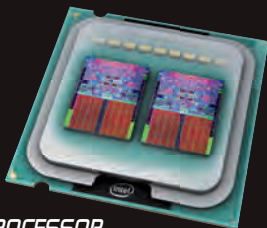
DREAM MACHINE

WE HAVE RECEIVED QUITE a few letters asking us to include the distributors' details or at least where you guys can purchase one of these super-hot pieces of hardware. Although I like the idea, it isn't a simple one to implement because most items are sold by more than one retailer, and to single one out would simply not be fair, as I am sure you guys can appreciate. However, I still like the

idea and will put something in place from the July issue onwards.

Judging by all the mails we receive, you guys really like the logo. So it's here to stay!

Keep sending those letters and make sure you address them to ten.nery@tidemedia.co.za with the subject heading 'Dream Machine'.



PROCESSOR

Intel Core 2 Extreme QX9650
Intel Corporation [011] 806-4530



KEYBOARD

Enermax Aurora
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



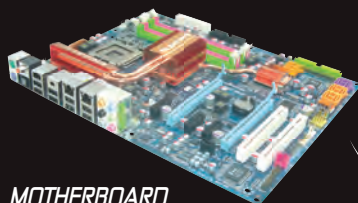
MONITOR

Acer AL2623W 26" Widescreen LCD
AXIZ [011] 237-7000



COOLING

Zalman Reserator XT
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



MOTHERBOARD

GIGABYTE GA-X48T-DQ6
GIGABYTE [011] 203-1000



MOUSE

Saitek GM3200 Laser Mouse
The Prophecy Shop [011] 888-5564



POWER SUPPLY

Silverstone Strider 1000W-ST1000
Aleet Distribution [011] 888-8916/26



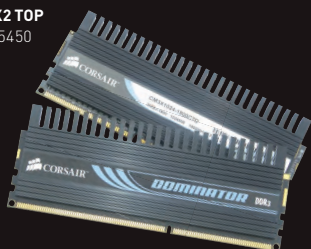
GRAPHICS CARD

ASUS EAH3870X2 TOP
ASUS [011] 783-5450



STORAGE

WD Caviar SE16
Drive Control [011] 201-8927



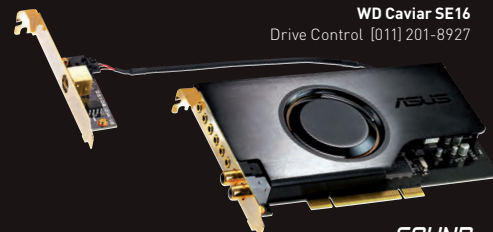
MEMORY

Corsair XMS3 CM3 X1024-1066C7
Frontosa [011] 466-0038



CASE

Cooler Master Cosmos S
Sonic Informed [011] 314-5800



SOUND

ASUS Xonar D2
AXIZ [011] 237-7000



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600W / 700W / 850W



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600W



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PC Benchmarks

WITH THE RECENT INTRODUCTION of 3DMark Vantage, it seems that the hype surrounding previous versions just isn't there. This may be because of the way Vantage has been designed, which renders other versions of it useless if you're not online and if you haven't paid for the Advanced version. (Pre-Hotfix)

These days, a benchmark is only used as a scoring or point system, and nothing else. Many will tell you that the last good benchmark was 3DMark2001 SE. If you used the Free edition, you had access to all tests. More importantly, it was based on an engine that would eventually power *Max Payne* and later on *Max Payne 2*.

That was seven years ago. Today we just have numbers. However, what do those numbers mean? Do they tell you how well *Assassin's Creed* will run on your GeForce 7800 or Radeon X1800? If you get a score of 5,000 in 3DMark06, how does that translate into what resolution and settings your computer will be able to run the game at? Is the point of a benchmark not to give you information about your system? A number is not information. It's just data and that's all.

Being able to compare the score online is useless, because those who bothered to submit a score had tweaked their PCs to boost the score. The degree to which this is done is irrelevant. The bottom line is that it has been done and that further dilutes any meaning the number may have had. As it stands now, a benchmark exists purely for competing and nothing else. There is no value to it at all anymore.

Wouldn't it be more useful if the benchmark still delivered a number, but stated - as an example - that, "The score of 8,244 suggests that the following titles are best played at 1,280 x 1,024, medium detail with 16x AA." This still gives you a number, but now you have information. You can then use this information to make an informed decision. Granted, there are a

number of titles released during the year, so the title list in the benchmarks would need to be updated monthly. This isn't an issue though, because you need to access the Website anyway to get a score. Rather than wondering how a specific title will perform on a given computer, wouldn't it be better if we had some idea of in-game performance before we purchased the title?

The benchmark would then serve a dual purpose. It would tell you how well a computer would run several games and it could continue to serve as a prediction of sorts of how next-generation titles would perform on the given computer (that was always the claim anyway). The benchmark wouldn't need to be justified with yet more obscure and rarely understood numbers, as the results would be justification enough for it to exist. In such a case, it even makes sense to charge a small fee for it because it would provide a useful service. It would still cater to the enthusiast, allow manufacturers and board partners to exploit the numbers as they have always done, but above all else, make it relevant to the gamer (which by far should be the number one priority).

So much more can be done with what we have now. **NAG**



These days, a benchmark is only used as a scoring or point system, and nothing else.



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The silence, versatility, and reliability of the award-winning Antec Performance One series are now available in a petite and manageable PC enclosure, the Mini P180. Factor in the heat-dissipating design, cutting-edge cooling, and sound-deadening side panels – you won't believe the big features we've fit into this elegantly small case. For more information, visit <http://www.antec.com>.

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VideoMate Vista E600F HW2 PCI-E
(R899)



VideoMate Vista U2800F
Hybrid D/A Stick
(R1,675)



VideoMate Vista U890F
TV Stick (R848)



COMPRO VIDEOMATE TV TUNER CARDS

WITH MORE AND MORE people making the move towards media-centre PCs, the need for a good TV-capture card is quite understandable.

Compro Technology has entered the market with four great options for this kind of setup. The VideoMate Vista range of TV receivers for PC and notebooks covers almost every available option, and places an immense amount of versatility in the end user's hands. These devices come in four flavours: two for PC and two for notebooks. The major difference between the available options on each platform is whether the receiver can supply digital TV viewing capabilities or not. However, the digital option does open up a wider variety of software-supported options.

The VideoMate Vista E600F HW2 PCI-E card is the non-digital option for PC. It allows the PC to receive universal analogue TV signals, and features a built-in, real-time MPEG-2 chip that allows for DVD-quality recording of the signal received. An advanced PIP system (Picture In Picture) allows viewing of TV while playing back video. Other useful features offered by the package - which comes with software, a remote and several cabling options (including a component video to S-video converter) - include PVR-style Time Shifting (to pause and rewind live TV) Channel Surfing (which displays a number of selected channels onscreen simultaneously) and Still Frame Capture. A handy power-up mode allows for scheduled recording.

The T500F variant is the digital-enabled version of the PC cards, and offers pretty much everything that the E600F does, with a few extras. Aside from the obvious, the card and software allow for recording of 1080i HDTV signals. Aside from that, the

E600F and T500F are almost identical in capabilities. Both perform perfectly well, and feature a number of capabilities and features that serve the media-system user very well.

The notebook versions are very similar to the PC cards, although they have certain limitations and differences imposed on them. Firstly, they aren't internal cards, but rather USB sticks with a USB plug on one side and an antenna socket on the other.

The VideoMate Vista U890F TV stick is the analogue-only version, and delivers almost exactly the same services than its PC-based counterpart does.

The U2800F variant is the digitally enabled USB solution, and (as the U890F) is capable of everything the PCI-E-based T500F is.

Both USB models come with a remote and cabling (in the form of converters and 'makeshift' antennas). They are large devices, and severely limit the mobility of a notebook due to the additional connections required.

The USB variants of the VideoMate range make a lot less sense than the PC cards do. They are fairly clunky for USB devices, and still require further connections to antennas and the like to function properly. The digital version, particularly, seems a little on the overkill side of portable computing. It requires a connection to the digital TV-signal source, which means either using a connection in a hotel room (which has a TV, theoretically) or lugging a satellite dish and decoder around in addition to the notebook and USB TV adapter. Free-to-air digital signals can be received, but you need to travel overseas for those. It makes sense if something needs to be recorded by someone who doesn't have a media-centre setup.

The PCI-E-based E600F and T500F are fantastic options for those who want to set up a media-centre PC, or for those who want to enhance their existing rig with a powerful and capable hardware and software bundle.

All of the cards require a fairly powerful system, although not a top-of-the-line gaming rig. A 1.7GHz processor is all that is required for TV viewing, but more advanced features need at least a 2.4GHz processor. A recommended RAM figure of 1GB is universal for all the cards, as well as a DirectX 9-capable graphics card or on-board graphics chip.

NAG

Walt Pretorius

BUNDLED SOFTWARE

To enhance the TV-viewing experience provided by these cards, as well as to add functionality, all versions of these cards include Ulead DVD MovieFactory 5 SE software. This software allows editing, creating and authoring of DVDs, as well as video-to-DVD conversion. Vista users can also take advantage of an included widget, which will display TV on the Windows Sidebar.



VideoMate Vista T500F Hybrid D/A PCI-E (R1,053)

E600F FUNCTIONS

Scheduled Recording
TV Stereo Support
Straight-to-Disk Recording
Still Frame Capture
Channel Surfing
Time Shifting
Analogue TV Reception (PAL, NTSC and SECAM)
FM Radio Reception

SCORE



U890F FUNCTIONS

Scheduled Recording
TV Stereo Support
Straight-to-Disk Recording
Still Frame Capture
Channel Surfing
Time Shifting
Analogue TV Reception (PAL, NTSC and SECAM)
FM Radio Reception

SCORE



T500F FUNCTIONS

Scheduled Recording
TV Stereo Support
Straight-to-Disk Recording
Still Frame Capture
Channel Surfing
Time Shifting
Analogue TV Reception (PAL, NTSC and SECAM)
Digital TV Reception
FM Radio Reception

SCORE



U2800F FUNCTIONS

Scheduled Recording
TV Stereo Support
Straight-to-Disk Recording
Still Frame Capture
Channel Surfing
Time Shifting
Analogue TV Reception (PAL, NTSC and SECAM)
Digital TV Reception
FM Radio Reception

SCORE



COMPRO TECHNOLOGY



VideoMate Vista M3F

Universal analog TV/FM capture card

Bundles Windows Media Center remote
Supports S4/S3 mode Power Up Scheduled Recording



VideoMate Vista M5F

Universal analog TV/FM capture card

Bundles Windows Media Center remote
Compro exclusive S5/S4/S3 mode Power Up Scheduled Recording
Bundle software: Ulead MovieFactory



VideoMate Vista T500F

Hybrid DVB-T & analog TV/FM reception tuner card

Watch DVB-T digital TV, analog TV, and listen to FM on your PC
Bundles Windows Media Center remote
Compro exclusive S5/S4/S3 mode Power Up Scheduled Recording
Support SDTV and 1080i HDTV
Bundle software: Ulead MovieFactory



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ZALMAN Z-MACHINE GV1000

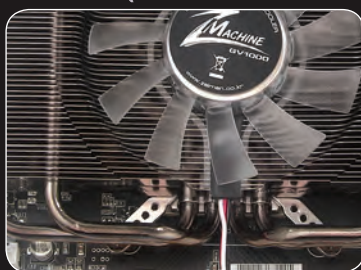
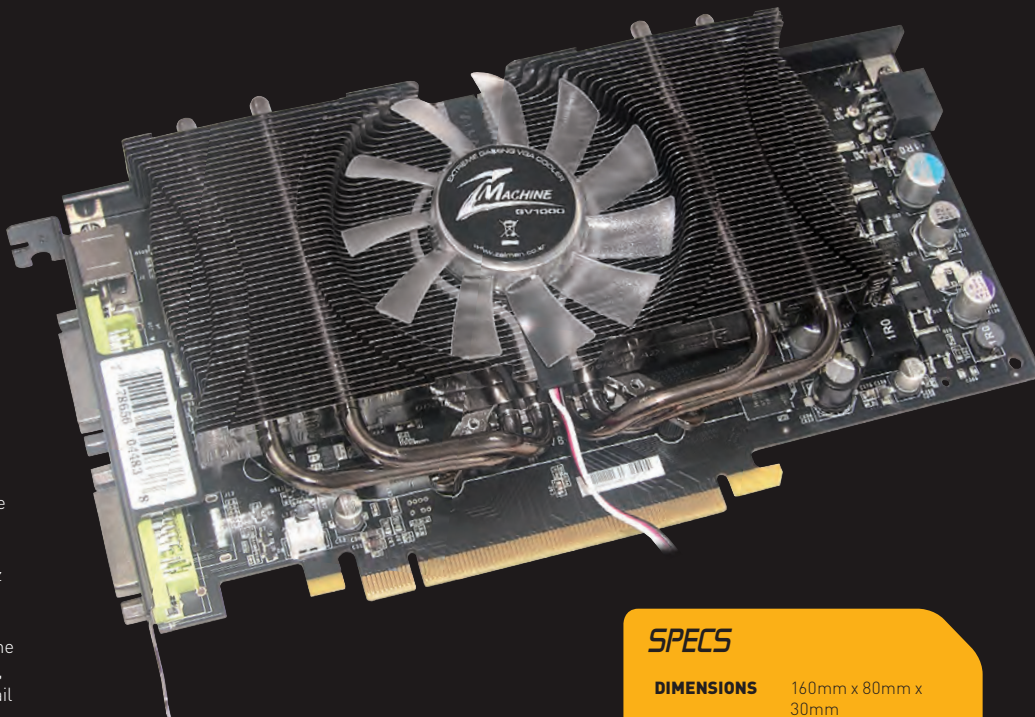
RRP→ R609 | Supplier→ Frontosa
Website→ www.frontosa.com
Brand→ Zalman

THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN buying a new graphics card, installing it and loading the latest game, only to find the performance underwhelming.

G92-based graphics cards perform and overclock considerably better with better cooling, especially if they can be kept under the 50°C mark. We installed the GV1000 on an XFX 8800GT and it dropped idle temperatures on the card to 38°C with the card overclocked to 700MHz/1,750MHz (shader clock) on the core. The GV1000 allowed us to further boost clocks to 775MHz/1,836MHz, which not only made the card deliver impressive 3DMark06 results, but it allowed us to play *Crysis* at High detail at 1,600 x 1,200 with 8x AF. Not only did the card overclock better, but it remained cool, hitting just over 54°C under load.

The heat sink is very simple to install and isn't cumbersome at all. It makes use of four heat pipes that transfer heat to the numerous fins – not a revolutionary way of designing a cooler, but one that works efficiently. As far as air coolers are concerned, they don't get much better than the Z-Machine GV1000. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko



Nickel-plated
heat pipes

SPECS

DIMENSIONS	160mm x 80mm x 30mm
WEIGHT	390g
FAN SPEED	1,650rpm to 3,600rpm
NOISE	20dBA to 36dBA

SCORE



GIGABYTE ODIN GT 800W

RRP→ R2,199 | Supplier→ Rectron
Website→ www.rectron.co.za
Brand→ GIGABYTE

800W PSUS ARE NOT new. In fact, they're quite common these days – and for good reason. Gaming rigs, with their power-hungry GPUs, CPUs and other components, need more power – lots of it. Therefore, when buying a PSU to power your high-end gaming rig, you'll need a reliable PSU delivering a lot of 'clean' power. The GIGABYTE ODIN GT may only be rated at 800W, but it's more than capable of powering four GPUs (two 3870X2 or 9800GX2 cards) and a highly overclocked CPU. In fact, the fastest computer in the country at the time of going to print was powered by this PSU. There isn't really anything to fault this PSU on, as it features the latest connectors for the EPS standard: ATX 2.2 and eight-pin PCI-E connectors.

The ODIN GT may seem expensive, but considering that other units rated at 800W cost twice as much, it makes the ODIN GT one of the best PSUs you can buy. Moreover, GIGABYTE's ODIN GT can be controlled using the bundled software. This allows you to monitor various rails and control fan speeds. You can also put the PSU in different modes in which you

can minimise power usage and the like. This is not a necessity, but it's good to see that GIGABYTE is offering more than just promises of superior power delivery.

If we had to describe the ODIN GT 800W in one word, it'd be "Brilliant." **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

NAG
HARDWARE



SPECS

TOTAL POWER OUTPUT	800W
12V RAILS	2 x 18A; 2 x 25A
EFFICIENCY	80%, 640W continuous
FEATURES	Quad CrossFire, Quad-SLI support, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V

SCORE





hardware

RRP → R2,699 | Supplier → Sonic Informed | Website → www.sonicinformed.co.za | Brand → Cooler Master

COOLER MASTER COSMOS S

HOW DO YOU IMPROVE a near-perfect case? This is obviously a question Cooler Master asked their designers and engineers. The answer, take the 1000 and make it better. However, the Cosmos S is still not perfect. Compared to the 1000, it has fewer drive bays, as the drive-mounting system has been changed in favour of a more conventional one. Nevertheless, with the new configuration, drives are much easier to access, even though the wires are now much harder to hide. What the Cosmos has that makes it better than its predecessor, is a new cooling system.

The Cosmos S keeps hardware even cooler than the 1000, thanks to the large 20cm fan on the side of the case that feeds cool air into the system. The cooling on the Cosmos S is among the best – if not the best – we have tested at NAG. Aesthetically, the Cosmos S is better looking than the 1000. The finishes are of a higher quality and the red highlights just ooze style. So, Cooler Master has managed to do the seemingly impossible by improving the 1000. The Cosmos S is without a doubt the best chassis we've ever had the pleasure of working with.

NAG

Neo Sibeko

SPECS

DIMENSIONS	266mm x 598mm x 628mm
WEIGHT	17.8kg
DRIVE BAYS	11 [4 x 3.5", 7 x 5.25"]
MOTHERBOARD SUPPORT	microATX/ATX/ EATX
I/O PORTS	4 x USB 2.0, 1 x FireWire, 1 x eSATA, audio input and output (headphone and mic)

SCORE



Three low-speed fans extract hot air from the case.



The touch-sensitive power button glows red when the system is on.



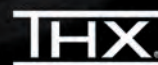
The Cosmos S has plenty of room inside to mount server motherboards.



Pre-cut holes with rubber sealing make for a water-cooler-friendly case.



2.1 Advanced Desktop Audio System



The Razer Mako™ 2.1 bi-amplified multimedia speaker system is co-developed by the audio scientists of gaming audio leader Razer™ and audio industry pioneer THX Ltd. It is the first desktop speaker system to incorporate the THX Ground Plane™ and THX Slot Speaker™ technologies, as well as ClassHD™ Digital Amplifier Technology, which enable rich, omnidirectional audio effects that will redefine the desktop sound experience.



Technical Specifications

- * THX-certified quality and performance
- * ClassHD™ digital amplifier technology with digital DSP control
- * Higher efficiency curves, improved SNR and EMI, and lowered distortion levels
- * Patented THX® Ground Plane and THX Slot Speaker™ technologies
- * Downward-firing design with optimized acoustic enclosure
- * All-in-one remote control pod with touch-sensitive LED dial
- * 3.5mm auxiliary input minijack
- * 3.5mm headphone minijack
- * RCA audio input
- * Frequency Range: 25-20,000Hz (+/-2.5dB 40-18,000Hz)
- * Total system power: 300W RMS



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MSI N9600GT-T2D512-OC

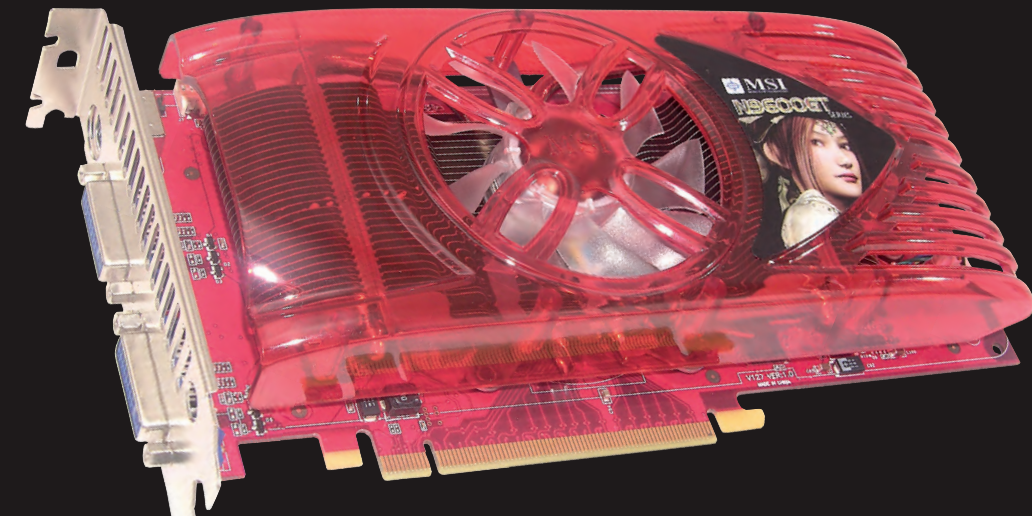
RRP→ R2,199 | **Supplier**→ Pinnacle Micro
Website→ www.pinnacle.co.za
Brand→ MSI

IF YOU HAVEN'T FIGURED it out by now, the 9600, 8800GT, 8800GTS and 9800GTX all use the same PCB. Therefore, you can purchase any of these cards and install them in your rig – they'll all fit. If you're an enthusiast who uses more extreme cooling methods, whatever block you have designed for any of the other cards will fit and work perfectly.

It's a good thing then that MSI has gone with a custom cooler instead of the reference one. This cooler may seem elaborate on MSI's part, but believe us, it's not.

The N9600GT-T2D512-OC is pre-overclocked, which boosts the already great performance of the card. Turn the fan speed up to full, and you can squeeze out some more performance. Surprisingly, during testing it, this card delivered numbers close to those of a standard 512MB 8800GT in some games and with enough tinkering almost managed to equal a standard 8800GT. At the higher resolutions, the 9600GT just couldn't cut it, but playing at 1,280 x 1,024, the difference in performance was negligible.

The card runs cool even when overclocked, and MSI's custom cooler is much quieter than a standard cooler. Overall, we couldn't fault the N9600GT-



Custom heat sink allows large overclocking headroom

NAG
HARDWARE



T2D512-OC. The 1GB of Qimonda 1.1n RAM is a bit of a waste and 512MB of 1ns Samsung RAM would have been better. However, we're just nitpicking. With its stellar performance, the N9600GT-T2D512-OC is a five-star product and excellent value for money. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SPECS

CORE	NVIDIA G92 (650MHz)
PROCESS	505 million gates (TSMC 65nm)
MEMORY	256-bit GDDR3 (1.8GHz, 1.1ns)
ROPS	16
SHADERS	64

SCORE



MSI K9A2 PLATINUM

RRP→ R1,899 | **Supplier**→ Pinnacle Micro | **Website**→ www.pinnacle.co.za | **Brand**→ MSI

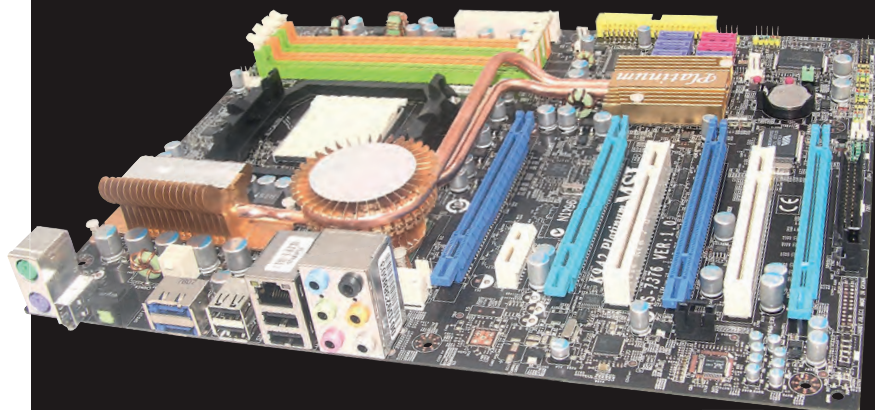
MSI'S K9A2 PLATINUM HAS received its fair share of glowing praise. In fact, the box itself reminds you of this, proudly declaring the product inside to be the "Editor's Choice" of probably the best-known hardware site on the Web. The K9A2 Platinum sure is feature-packed, sporting four PEG slots and supporting HT 3.0 as well as the full PCI-E 2.0 specification.

However, upon closer inspection and during tests, we discovered some flaws on this MOBO. The DIMM slots are incorrectly colour coded, meaning that if you slot your memory modules into similarly coloured slots, you'll be running your RAM in single channel instead of dual channel. The Circupipe cooling system sits far too high

up, making the use of longer GPUs a bit difficult, as the pipes are in the way.

These flaws are unfortunate, as the K9A2 Platinum is a really solid platform, and for anyone looking to the AMD Spider platform as their future gaming solution, offers great prospects. AMD claims that the 790 chipset will offer major performance benefits for users of quad-core Phenom processors and ATI 3xxx series graphics cards. Nevertheless, the design is flawed. We're anticipating a second revision of this board with its physical imperfections resolved, hopefully with quad-core Phenoms in hand by then. Until then, unfortunately, no Editor's Choice accolade for MSI from us. **NAG**

Russell Bennett



SPECS

CHIPSET	AMD790
CPU SUPPORT	All AMD AM2 and AM2+ processors
MEMORY SUPPORT	4 x DIMMs (DDR2 up to 1,066MHz)
EXTERNAL CONNECTORS	2 x PS/2, 4 x USB 2.0, Gigabit LAN, analogue and digital audio, 2 x eSATA, 1 x FireWire
INTERNAL CONNECTORS	6 x SATA 3Gb/sec, 1 x IDE, 8 x USB
SLOTS	4 x PCI-E 16x, 1 x PCI-E 1x, 2 x PCI

SCORE



RAZER DESTRUCTOR PROFESSIONAL GAMING MAT

RRP→ R446 | Supplier→ Frontosa | Website→ www.frontosa.co.za | Brand→ Zalman

A MOUSE PAD IS A mouse pad, right? One might be forgiven for thinking that, but the truth is that a large part of your mouse's performance comes from the surface it is being used on. The average person can get away with almost anything as a mousing surface, but those who require true precision – such as top-notch gamers – will need something a little punchier. The Razer Destructor Professional Gaming Mat offers a great solution for those who take their headshots seriously.

This semi-solid mouse surface comes packaged in its own protective carry case, and features a fractal-textured surface that offers a claimed 37% increase in performance over a competing game-grade surface. While this number is difficult to measure, the performance increase is more than a little noticeable. Smaller movements are required when using this surface, purely due to the increased reaction that the mouse sensor picks up from the mat.

Just 2.3mm thick, this pad is very wide: 350mm long and 280mm wide (top to bottom). Its optimised surface results in a terrific feel as the mouse glides over it; there is no hint of roughness or snagging during use.

Whether the price of this mouse pad is justified depends entirely on what you want from your mouse surface. If you are after absolute precision and a silky smooth feel, then it's well worth it. **NAG**

Walt Pretorius

SPECS

SIZE	350mm x 280mm x 2.3mm
MATERIAL	Semi-solid plastic
SURFACE	Razer fractal-textured surface

SCORE



ZALMAN ZM1000-HP 1000W POWER SUPPLY

RRP→ R3,290 | Supplier→ Frontosa
Website→ www.frontosa.co.za
Brand→ Zalman

ZALMAN IS PROBABLY BETTER known for its cooling solutions than for its PSUs. However, Zalman produces some potent PSUs and the ZM1000-HP is a perfect example of this. It's a no-frills, minimalist unit, which doesn't claim to be anything else other than a 1kW PSU.

In today's advertising-driven environment, one would expect Zalman to advertise the ZM1000-HP's six 12V rails all over the show. However, they have not done so since six 12V rails aren't really useful for anything when the maximum number of PCI-E 8/6-pin connectors one can use is limited to four. The two extra 12V rails are probably there because the plant that produces the PSU manufactures similar PSUs for other hardware vendors.

What Zalman does highlight, and rightly so, is the dual heat-pipe design, which keeps the PSU cool. Because the 12cm fan isn't constantly spinning at full throttle, the ZM1000-HP is also very quiet. Most importantly, the ZM1000-HP produces a continuous 860W of power with a high 86% power efficiency. This results in reliable power that you can trust, which is not the case with many power supplies claiming kilowatt figures but providing pathetic power delivery.

The ZM1000-HP features two 28A 12V rails, which are probably the second most important specification of the PSU. The



other 12V rails are rated at 18A, which is adequate for all graphics cards currently available.

If you are looking for a 1kW PSU to last you for at least three years, look no further than the Zalman ZM1000-HP. **NAG**

Neo Sibeko

SPECS

TOTAL POWER	1,000W
12V RAILS	4 x 18A; 2 x 28A
EFFICIENCY	86%, 860W continuous
FEATURES	Quad CrossFire, Quad-SLI support, ATX 2.2, EPS 12V

SCORE



hardware

ZALMAN

Trimon 2D/3D Convertible LCD Monitor



ZM-M19 - 19" LCD

Main Features

- * Ultra clear 2D/3D imaging
- * No ghost imaging
- * Best choice for 3D media and 3D based applications
- * Easy 2D/3D convertibility
- * The widest viewing angle
- * Rapid response time and high contrast ratio
- * Elegant design
- * Rotatable (90°), Tilttable, High adjustable



ZM-M220W - 22" Wide LCD



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ASUS EN9600GT VS. ASUS EAH3850 TOP

WHEN AMD/ATI FIRST ANNOUNCED the RV670 chipset, which would power its new 3870 and 3850 range of graphics cards, it looked like a very promising contender in the midrange graphics card market, technically upstaging the chipset powering the G92-powered NVIDIA offerings it would compete against. However, we had to wait for retail samples to actually arrive on shelves...

Now they're everywhere, and we've been pleasantly surprised by excellent stock availability, traditionally an AMD/ATI shortcoming. Meanwhile, NVIDIA has been busy and has come up the 9600GT to counter the threat. Based on a G94 core, which, despite the nomenclature, is in fact half of a G92 core with some enhancements, it replaces the 8xxx series, which the 3850 was originally meant to compete with.

Both of our review units are ASUS boards, the EN9600GT and EAH3850 TOP. Yes, we do have a soft spot for TOP-branded boards, which are factory-overclocked samples that are sometimes fabulous, and admittedly sometimes rather disappointing.

A quick look through the specification sheets showed that, in terms of clock speeds, the NVIDIA card was still a step or two behind the AMD/ATI screamers. All right, the TOP is a TOP, but with a core clock of 730MHz and 256MB of GDDR running at 950MHz (1.9GHz effective) it's faster than the NVIDIA offering (650MHz core clock and 900MHz GDDR). For interest sake, the stock 3850 will run at 670MHz and 830MHz.

The 9600GT does have more RAM, sporting 512MB.

We tested both cards on a system running an Intel Q6600 CPU clocked to 3.2GHz, with 2GB of DDR2 running at 980MHz on an Intel Bad Axe 2 Extreme MOBO. Benchmarks were conducted using Vista as the OS, due to the need to test both cards' DX10.1 capabilities, running the latest official Catalyst and ForceWare packages respectively.

Our synthetic benchmark, Futuremark's 3DMark06, immediately placed the AMD/ATI card in the lead, clearly liking the better frequencies. At the stock benchmark settings, the AMD/ATI-based card scored 7,288 points, with the NVIDIA card trailing at 6,712. Cranking the resolution up to 1,920 x 1,440 and employing 4x AA didn't make much of a difference.

In *Company of Heroes*, *Crysis*, *UT3* and even *F.E.A.R.*, the AMD/ATI offering delivered superior average framerates. In *F.E.A.R.*, however, the NVIDIA-based card had the edge in outright speed, as it achieved the highest maximum framerate. However, because of achieving a lower minimum framerate, the 3850 still had the edge overall.

So, the AMD/ATI part, costing less than the NVIDIA part, performed better overall. And surprisingly, NVIDIA's latest contender, despite the company knowing well what it was up against, fell short. It seems that the G94 chipset is mostly about fixing the SLI issues of the G92. However, the 9600GT

SPECS

	EN9600GT	EAH3850 TOP
GPU	G94	RV670
CORE CLOCK	650MHz	730MHz
SHADER VERSION	PS4.0	PS4.0
PIPELINES	64	320 stream processors
VIDEO MEMORY	512MB GDDR3	256MB GDDR3
MEMORY CLOCK	900MHz	950MHz
MEMORY BUS	256-bit	512-bit

SCORES

EN9600GT	EAH3850 TOP
★★★★★	★★★★★

easily overclocked to speeds well beyond what the AMD/ATI was capable of achieving, even when playing with the Overdrive OC settings of the card. We see a large, multi-vendor midrange shootout coming... For ATI fans, after being in the doldrums since the Canadian company's acquisition by AMD, it's enough to know that right now we'd recommend the 3850 over the 9600GT for its out-of-the-box gaming performance.

Russell Bennett

DUAL HEATPIPE COOLED ZM1000-HP



1000W - POWER SUPPLY

Powerful. Beyond your expectation!

ZM1000-HP is a power supply equipped with high performance heatpipes to maximize cooling performance and with modular cables to enhance user friendliness

1000W / 850W



750W / 600W / 500W



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INTEL CPU SHOOTOUT:

CORE 2 QUAD VS. CORE 2 DUO

OVER THE LAST COUPLE of years, we have seen dual-core CPUs shifting from being a novelty on only the most expensive R10,000-plus systems to today's sub-R5,000 computers all featuring dual-core processors. Now, in mid-2008, one can pick up a quad-core CPU for less than what a dual-core CPU sold for as recently as last year. This rapid adoption of multi-core processors has increased the average desktop performance more dramatically than any other time in history, and for the most part has made CPU type less important than the number of cores available.

As great as multi-core CPUs are, software - in particular games - have been lagging behind, failing to take advantage of the increased number of cores. So with that in mind, we set out finding the best-value-for-money CPU for a modern gaming PC. While it's true that games will eventually make use of four or more cores, by the time that is true, chances are that all current CPUs will be irrelevant. Therefore, there's very little point in investing in the most expensive CPU now in the hope that your investment will pay off in two or more years.

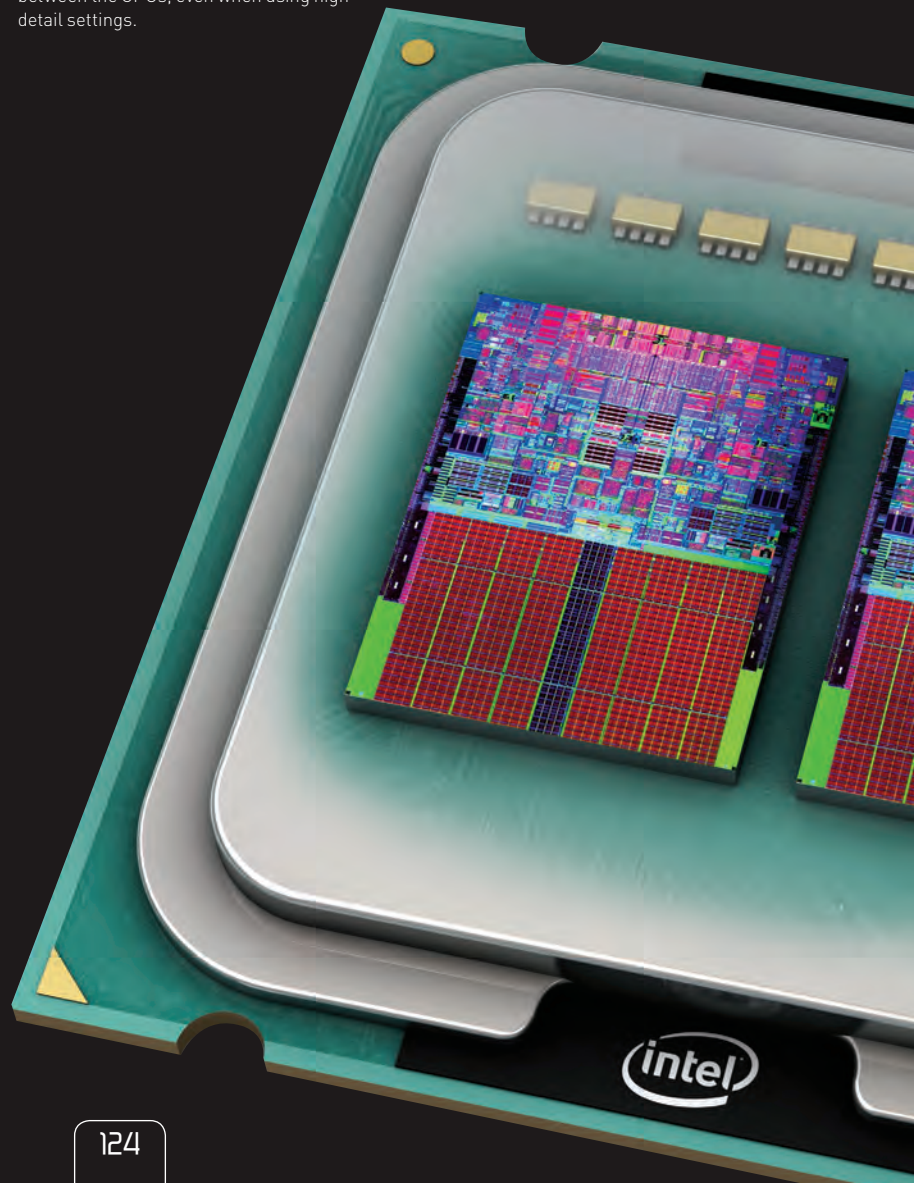
While many will argue that using a quad-core CPU results in a better Windows experience than using a dual- or single-core processor, there is no direct way to measure it. However, we can measure gaming performance by running timed demos and the like, which will give us tangible results that we can use.

We initially wanted to include eleven CPUs in this roundup, but because most gamers are likely to buy midrange to high-end CPUs and will rarely buy the lower-end variants, we had to drop one CPU.

In terms of gaming platforms, we have provided a list of all current-generation graphics cards, from the most powerful to the least capable. This is not an exhaustive list, as it only contains graphics cards currently in production and ones that may be considered premium-game capable (which will obviously exclude GeForce 8600- and Radeon HD3650-class graphics cards).

Based on pricing and performance, we decided that the best graphics card to use

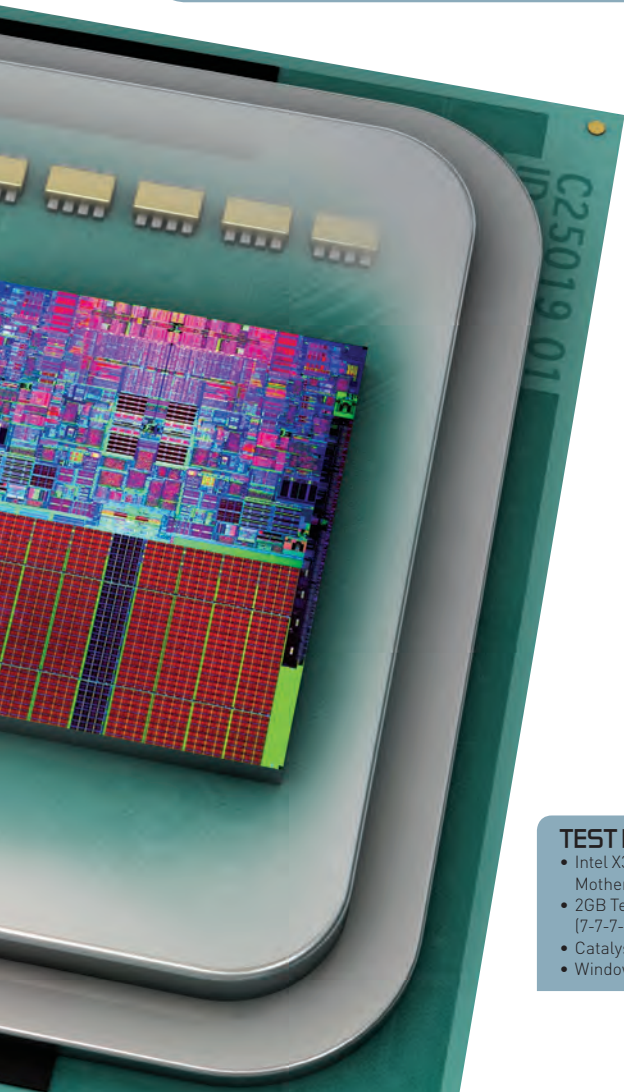
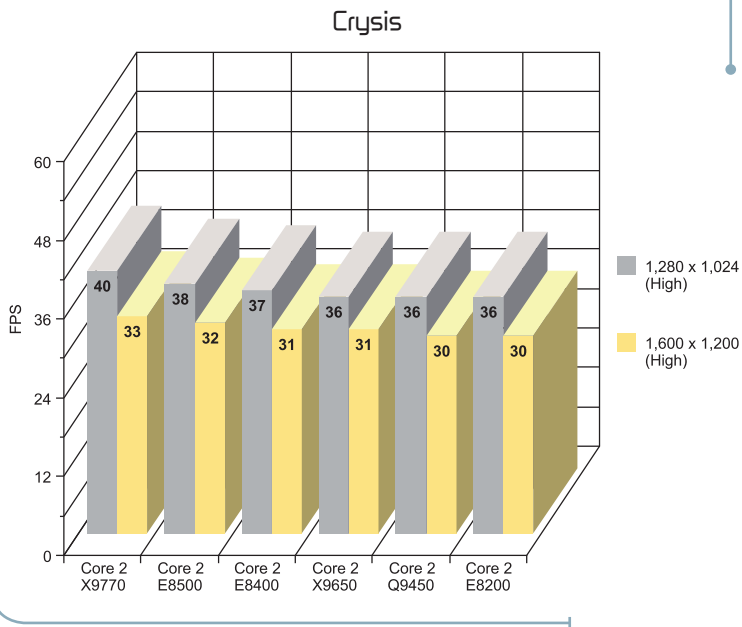
would be the HD3870X2. It's the second fastest graphics card available and sells in the price range previously reserved for the mid-high-end parts. While it only scores better than the 9800GX2 in terms of value, it's fast enough to show the differences between the CPUs, even when using high-detail settings.



CRYSIS:

Without a doubt, *Crysis* is the most demanding game currently available for the PC, but also the best-looking FPS. All the effects that one can think off are present in this title, which places it in a league of its own in terms of visuals. However, all this eye candy comes at a price, as most systems

struggle to achieve respectable framerates. The Intel Core 2 Duo E8500 is the best performer here as it outpaced the X9650, but costs significantly less. The fastest, as expected, is the hideously expensive X9770, which is the only CPU to break the 40fps mark.



TEST RIG

- Intel X38BT (Bonetrail) DDR3 Motherboard
- 2GB Team Xtreme DDR3 1,066MHz [7-7-7-21-1T] dual-channel mode
- Catalyst Driver 8.4
- Windows Vista SP1



THE ULTIMATE GAMERS BUNDLE



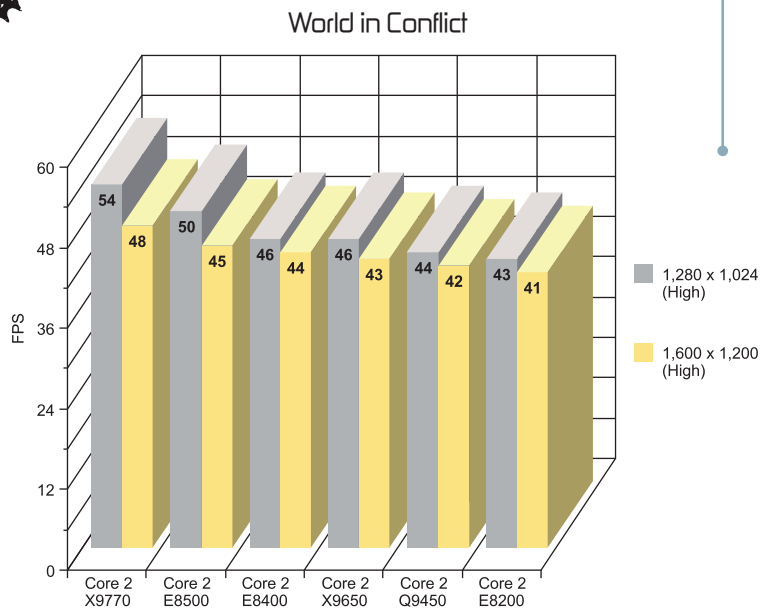
SMS Consoles to 39040

Sms's charged at **R5** per console
Entry with permission of Bill Payer
Terms and conditions apply
Competition closes 31 July 2008
Winners will be notified by phone
All rights reserved
Prizes consists of Nintendo WII,
PS3 and Xbox 360

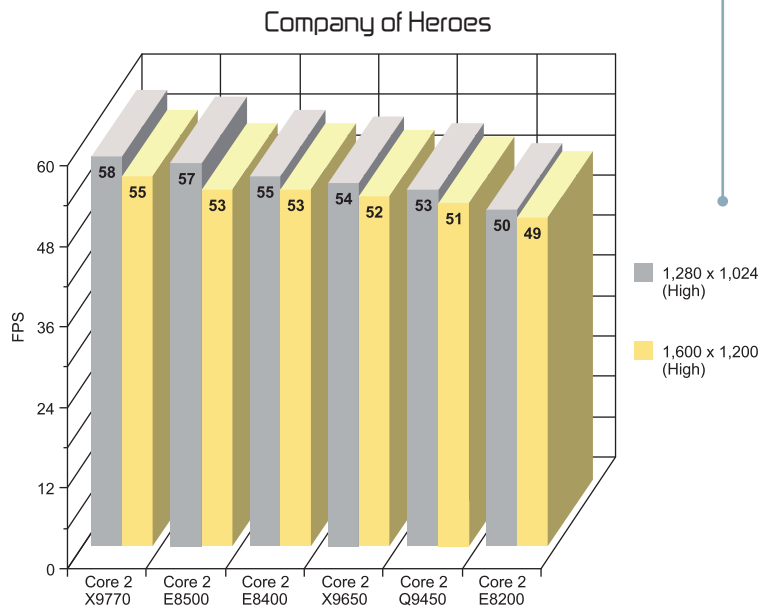
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WORLD IN CONFLICT:

Probably one of the best-looking RTS games currently available, this title features a DirectX 10 rendering mode that is nothing short of spectacular. However, for testing we made use of the DirectX 9 mode, because it, unlike the former, is playable and isn't completely GPU bound. Once again, the X9770 took the lead, achieving 4fps more than the X9650, which may not seem like much, but if you have paid that kind of money for a CPU, it's a difference you'll want to see. The Core 2 Duo E8500 once again was the best-performing

**COMPANY OF HEROES: OPPOSING FORCES**

Company of Heroes: Opposing Forces is another strategy game that features a DirectX 10 render path, which makes slight improvements to the spectacular visuals the game already has. The strangest thing about this title is that the built-in performance testing option renders the game in a predominately first-person mode, which is not really a representation of the in-game graphics at all. Having said that, however, the numbers translate almost perfectly to the in-game numbers you will see when playing the game. In this title, the quad-core CPUs were firmly in the lead, outperforming every single dual-core CPU tested. This doesn't mean that dual-core CPUs aren't good for playing this game, as framerates were consistently above 50fps on every CPU, save for the 1,600 x 1,200 setting on the E8200, which fell short by one frame per second. It should be no surprise to anyone by now that the E8500 is the CPU of choice, as it delivers performance close enough to that of the Q9450 (which is great to say the least).

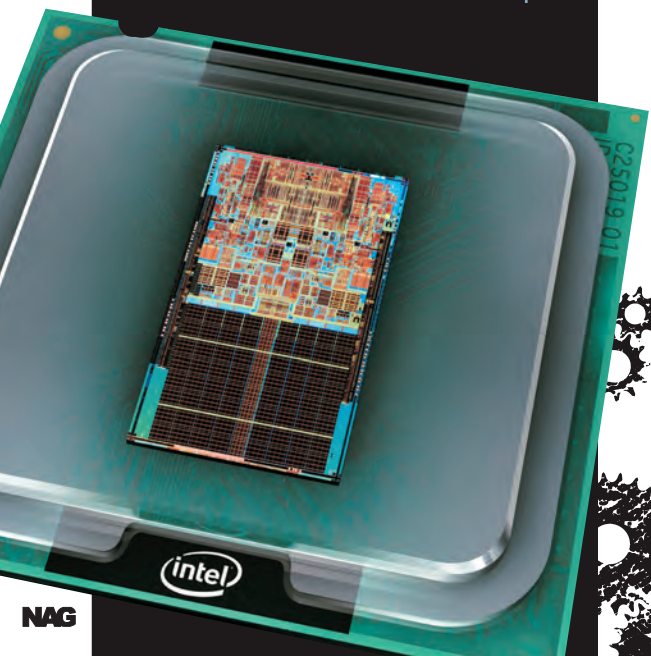
**FOR THE ENTHUSIASTS:**

The numbers represented here are not in any way relevant to the overclocking crowd, but coincidentally, the E8500 is the easiest CPU to overclock as it has the highest multiplier of all the CPUs - save for the Extreme Edition versions. Even with the low FSB of X38/X48 boards, the E8500 may clock to a mighty 4.89GHz with the FSB set to 515MHz. The quad-core CPUs - the 9450 and 9550 (not present here) - are most certainly not a wise decision. While the multipliers are not the worst, the quads have very low FSB walls and some struggle to reach a 450MHz FSB. This makes the quad-core CPUs (except the Extreme Editions) difficult to recommend. If you can afford the X9650 or X9770,

however, go ahead and purchase it, as these have incredible performance out of the box and overclock brilliantly (especially the X9650).

CONCLUSION:

It's inevitable that, as more games are released, quad-core CPUs will have an advantage over their dual-core counterparts. How long that will take is anybody's guess. However, as it stands, dual-core CPUs still offer the best performance for the price. Without a doubt, the winner here is the Intel Core 2 Duo E8500. In terms of value for money, the E8200 is an excellent processor, although it mostly languished at the bottom of the performance charts. **NAG**



remembering youth day
16th June

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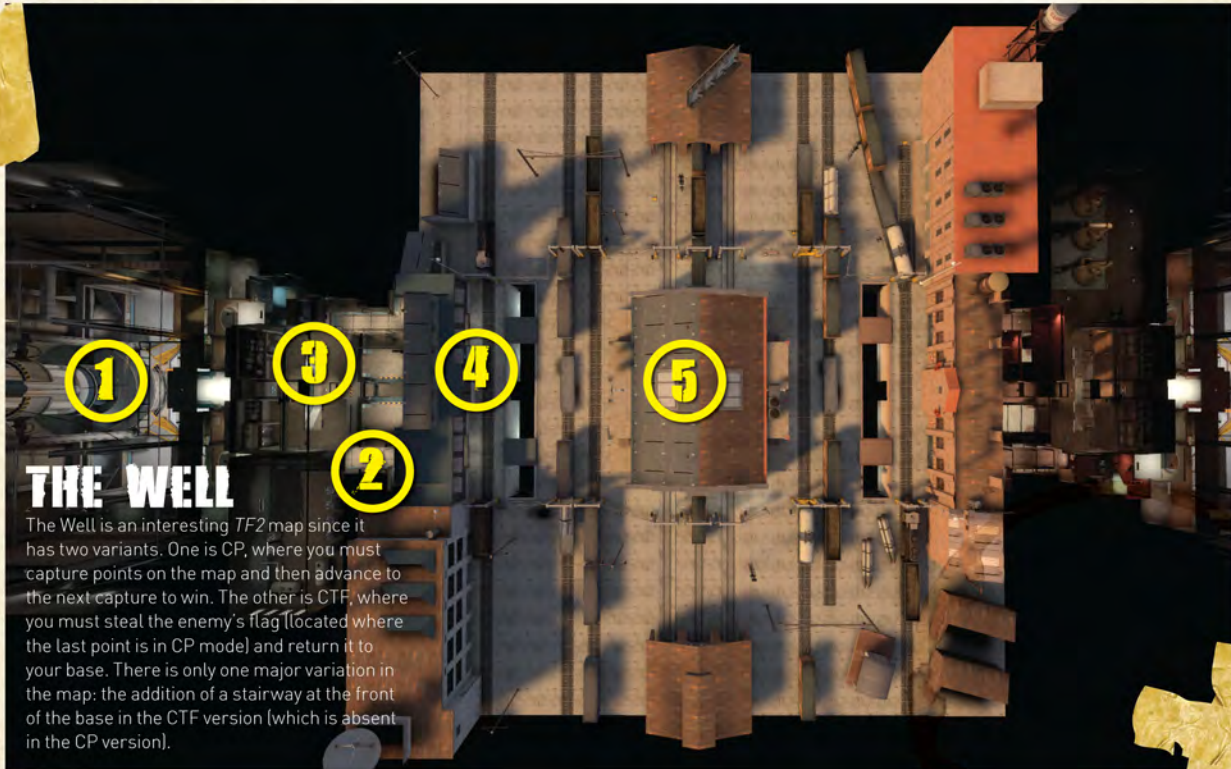
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TEAM FORTRESS 2

STRATEGY GUIDE PART 3

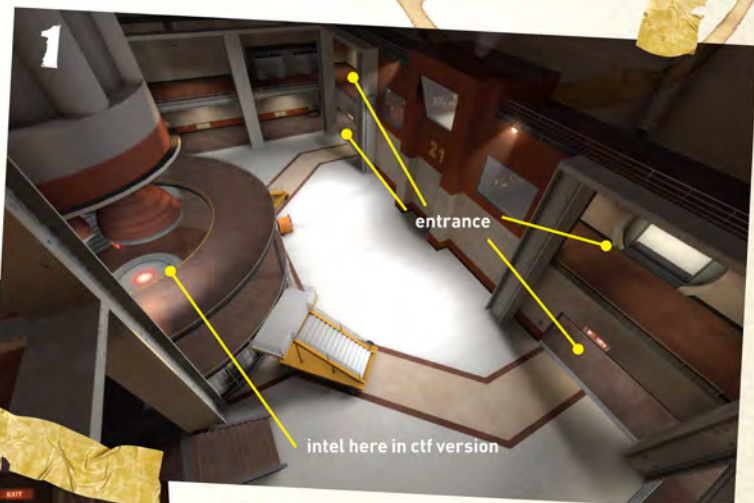


THE WELL

The Well is an interesting *TF2* map since it has two variants. One is CP, where you must capture points on the map and then advance to the next capture to win. The other is CTF, where you must steal the enemy's flag (located where the last point is in CP mode) and return it to your base. There is only one major variation in the map: the addition of a stairway at the front of the base in the CTF version (which is absent in the CP version).

POINT 1

In the CTF version of the map, the intelligence (flag) is located on the platform shown here. In the CP version, the last capture point is there. In the CP version, your first spawn will be at the back wall, and it will move forward as you capture points. In CTF mode, the spawns are fixed a bit farther forward in your base. Note that there are four entrances to this room: two from the top and two from the bottom.



POINT 2

In CP mode, another point will be near the middle of your base. The second spawn for CP is on the right, and in CTF, this spawn and one opposite on the left will be the fixed spawn points. The ledge at the top is an ideal spot for sentries in the CP version, but you'll need one on each side. In the CTF version, the sentry won't cover the front stairs to the upper part of the base.

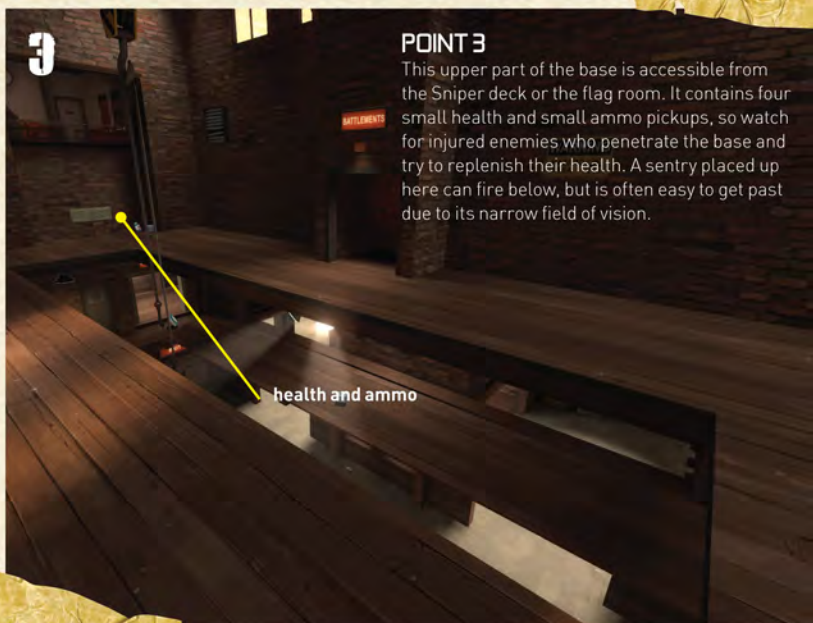
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NAME NOM Agent# 365997

3

POINT 3

This upper part of the base is accessible from the Sniper deck or the flag room. It contains four small health and small ammo pickups, so watch for injured enemies who penetrate the base and try to replenish their health. A sentry placed up here can fire below, but is often easy to get past due to its narrow field of vision.



health and ammo

4

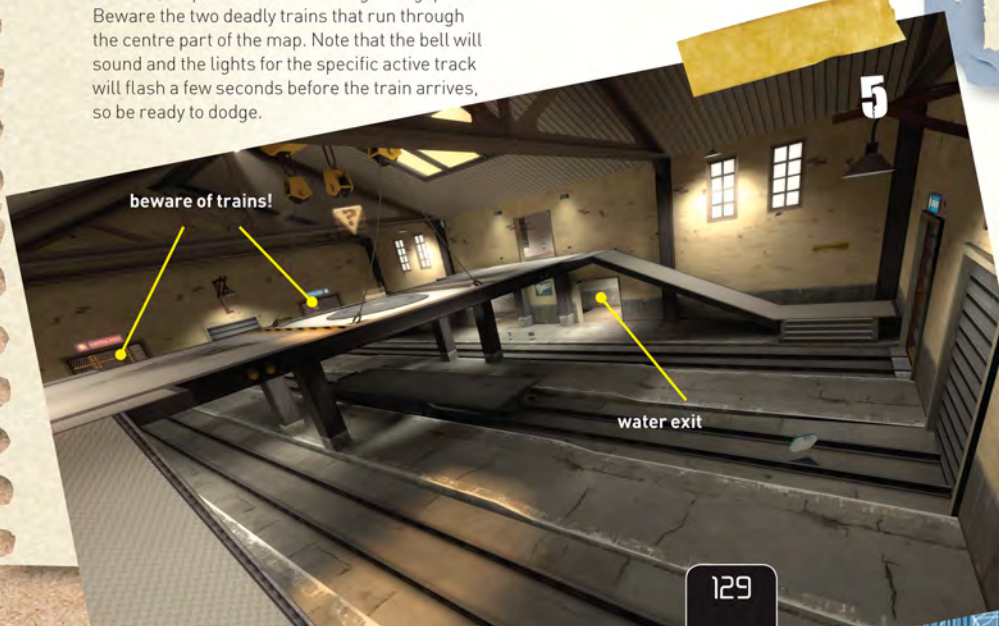
water entrance

stairs here in ctf version



POINT 4

The centre of Well is dominated by a single structure, with railroad cars blocking the sides to force people to enter the room. Soldiers or Demos can jump over them even before the round starts in CP mode, so be careful. In addition, Snipers can shoot through the gaps. Beware the two deadly trains that run through the centre part of the map. Note that the bell will sound and the lights for the specific active track will flash a few seconds before the train arrives, so be ready to dodge.



beware of trains!

water exit

5

ROCKET MAN

The Soldier is an essential part of any complete, well-balanced team. While they are the second slowest class, the ability to rocket jump gives them superior mobility in many situations. Learning to maximise the Soldier's strengths and minimise his weaknesses is the key to being the one dishing it out, rather than taking it.

The rocket launcher is an interesting primary weapon. Unlike most of the other guns in the game, it delivers the same punch whether at your feet or across the map. Keep this in mind when firing it at close targets: you may just accidentally shoot yourself in the foot. One strategy is to fire a few rockets, and switch to your shotgun so that your opponent thinks you're out. Then when he gets confident, pull the rockets out again and nail him. Keep in mind that the rocket itself flies pretty slow, and is thus quite easy to dodge at long range if the enemy sees it coming.

One possible way around this is to not let them see it coming. Tactics such as popping out from behind cover, firing a rocket or two and jumping back are very effective. This is an ideal way to take down a sentry gun without being killed, provided that the Engineer is not around to heal it. If he is, you'll probably run out of ammo before he does, since he likely has a dispenser to back him up. So shoot one rocket at the sentry gun and three at the dispenser, and he'll probably lose the latter. This may seem trivial but in a coordinated offensive assault, that dispenser can make all the difference.

Another use for rockets is to suppress Snipers at long range. They may be able to dodge easily, but when they do, it means that they cannot be shooting you or your teammates. Your firing rate and reload time are predictable, so try mixing up your timing to throw them off guard. They may pop back out right into a rocket in the face.



POINT 5

There is a water route for this central area on each side that also functions as the forward spawns in CP mode. It leads to the moat in front of the opposing base. Note that the path accessing the water from inside the base is one-way outgoing. Scouts or Spies will want to take advantage of the water route to try to evade enemies.



2FORT

2Fort (short for Two Forts) is probably the best-known map. The design has been slightly changed since it first appeared over a decade ago in the original Team Fortress. This fact is a testament to the quality of the design of this map, and back in the day, many servers would run it and nothing else. It can be somewhat confusing for first-time players, but is not overly large, so can be memorised in a short time.

POINT 2

The front of the fort has three entrances: two on the front wall around the corner to the left, and one from the sewers down the stairs ahead. Most teams will try to assault both the front and sewer routes at once, but keep in mind that Soldiers and Demos can also rocket-jump directly to the upper deck, bypassing this area. There's also another jump point just inside the front, which is a good defence position for Demos and a good alternative escape point for Scouts.

to point 4

to point 3

POINT 1

In the basement of your fort is the intelligence (flag) room. It has two entrances that fork from the adjoining hallway. One critical mistake inexperienced teams often make is to ignore the defence of the intelligence until they hear it's been taken. An enemy Engineer who sneaks in here and has time to set up a dispenser, teleporter and sentry will be extremely difficult to remove. This will give the enemy a foothold in your base and the ability to attack your defences from two sides, as well as continual access to your intelligence.

to intel

3

to point 4

POINT 3

This main room has two entrances below that come from the common front/sewer area, and two exits above. One goes down the stairs directly to the basement, and the other goes to the main upper area with the spawn and the second access to the basement. This is one of the most popular sentry areas. However, be aware that Soldiers and Demos can enter through alternative paths that bypass this room completely.

2

rocket jump to point 4

front entrance

to point 2

to point 1

to sewers

HEAVY METAL

The Heavy Weapons Guy (Heavy for short) is easy to spot. He's the big guy with the big gun - the big gun that does bad things to bad people who get in front of it. Unfortunately, manoeuvring him into a position to make this happen is one of the major drawbacks. He's slow.

On the upside, Medics will generally want to buddy up with you first before anyone else, and when this happens, most enemies - especially Spies and Snipers - will focus their attention on your Medic instead of you. This means that you need to be alert and suspicious of anyone who runs behind you (friend or foe) since your Medic is counting on you for defence. Don't ignore lighter classes such as Scouts as they can easily take out your defenceless Medic.

Since the Heavy attracts Medics, it's worth mentioning (for the sake of novice players) that when you and the Medic start glowing, you need to start shooting things. This is called über-charge. It only lasts for ten seconds and the Medic can only do it occasionally. Try not to waste it. This means that if you're down to 20 bullets you might want to tell him before he uses it and you run in punching things. Since your big gun takes time to start up, when you're moving around the map you should switch to your shotgun, since it can be fired instantly if enemies surprise you. An interesting peculiarity is that you don't slow down if you're jumping or falling, so spinning your gun up in mid-jump can let you pop out from around a corner quicker than spinning up first and walking around it.

Despite the large amount of hit points, the Heavy is at a disadvantage in many situations, usually when enemies are at long range. A level-one sentry gun will take you down if you're at a reasonable distance, even if you're spun up and firing when you come out into its line of sight. The numbers just aren't on your side. Since you're too slow to run away or chase down foes, you'll need to hang back from the front lines and rely on other players to herd enemies towards you, or corner them somewhere you can lay siege to.



THE WIZARD OF OZ

The Sniper is perhaps the most reviled class in the game. However, only the inexperienced would call him cheap. The Sniper has significant play-balance features that are uncommon in most FPS games, such as the shot power charge up and the low rate of fire. Still, since the Sniper can often kill enemies with no warning from ranges that make them difficult to exact revenge on, they are despised by their enemies and often underappreciated by their friends.

Despite this, one should aspire not to be a selfish Sniper. This means avoiding the focused sniping wars that often develop on certain maps where Snipers only attack each other from range and ignore the rest of the game. This means that you're wasting a slot on the server, which someone else could make better use of. It also means occasionally moving up and providing cover at the front despite the risk of being fragged. If your kill-to-death ratio is too precious to you for that, you're playing the wrong game. This is TEAM Fortress.

The Sniper's rifle is pretty much what you'd expect: high power, long range, one shot at a time. However, it charges power as you're zoomed in with the scope (use your Alt-fire key to zoom in). You can see this on the little charge meter. When charged, a shot will kill many lighter classes such as Scouts, Demos and Pyros, regardless of where it hits. Headshots will always do critical damage and are the only way to take down the tougher classes such as Soldiers and Heavies with one shot. Keep in mind that Medics are always a priority target: unlike most other classes, they have no warning to engage their über-charge before you attack them. Changing the position you snipe from regularly is a good idea to prevent the enemy from devising a strategy to flank you.

The submachine gun, which is the Sniper's secondary weapon, is reasonable at close and medium ranges, but if someone's close enough to attack you, you're better off trying to run away while firing than taking them on.



POINT 4

This is the main upper area of 2Fort. The previous room is on the right, the Sniper deck on the left, and dead ahead is one of the alternative jump entrances/defence points. The 'spiral' route to the basement is the door in the right wall at the end of the room. Note that a single sentry gun covering this room will either have to have its back to the alternative entrances, or leave the other room with its stairway uncovered.

to point 2

to point 1

to point 5

to point 3

to point 2

to point 4

POINT 5

Finally, we have the outside view from the Sniper deck. The covered bridge is the main approach route, and below it in the water are the entrances to the sewer areas. Note that there is a large health point on each side in the sewers,

so attackers who take damage will often jump in the water and head that way. Snipers can sometimes lose focus and wind up locked in battle against each other, which ties up firepower in a useless mini-game that doesn't help in capturing the enemy's intelligence.



SPEED RACER



GAME TRAILER
ON THE DVD

The Wachowski brothers decided to follow up their *Matrix* trilogy with a kid's movie based on an old 1967 Japanese animated TV series. What's up?

THE SERIES IN QUESTION was titled *Mach Go Go Go*, but was titled *Speed Racer* in the US. It was about a daredevil race car driver named Speed, who drove a fancy race car filled with all kinds of gizmos. Think Inspector Gadget on wheels, and you have the idea. His chief opponent was a mysterious villain named Racer X, played by Matthew Fox from *Lost*.

"This film has all these visuals and elements to it that you've never seen before," claims Emile Hirsch, who plays Speed. "It doesn't look like *The Matrix*, and it doesn't feel like *The Matrix*. It feels more like *Blade Runner* meets Andy Warhol's Pop Art. Who wouldn't want to see that? And wait until the people see the Mach 5 in action!"

The Mach 5 is the name of the futuristic race car driven by Hirsch (who played the young drifter in *Into The Wild*) in the movie. Ironically, for a movie about race cars, there aren't any real ones in the entire movie. In fact, there isn't any real racing in it either: the \$100-million movie was shot in a studio in Germany using the same computer-generated processes employed in films such as *Sin City* and *300*. However, expect the Wachowski brothers to push the envelope when it comes to this sort of thing. Word has it that they used a revolutionary type of new digital high-definition camera, which allows for both the background and foreground to be in focus at the same time – just like a panel in a comic book!

"I didn't have a single scene outdoors," Hirsch admitted in an interview. "Everything

I did on *Speed Racer* was shot on a greenscreen stage." Speed is a talented racer who is loyal to his family's race business. One day he irks the owner of a huge corporation by refusing to drive for the corporation in question. In the process, he also learns that these races are in fact rigged by a handful of corporate bosses for their own profit. The corporate boss swears that if Speed didn't race for them, then he would never finish another race again. Thus, Speed is sure to meet with an 'accident' during The Crucible, a dangerous cross-country race that also claimed the life of his older brother, who also used to be a racer.

Speed Racer is the sort of movie in which characters have names such as Trixie (Speed's girlfriend played by Christina Ricci), and the hero has a chimp sidekick named Chim Chim. Yes, the Wachowski brothers have really made a family-friendly movie. Apparently, they were inspired to make *Speed Racer* after having watched the *Ice Age* movies. "I know that sounds a little crazy," says *Speed Racer* producer, Joel Silver (who also produced *The Matrix* movies). "But really, they thought those were wonderful family films and they decided they'd like to make something that wasn't R-rated. We're really excited about what this film will be. We think audiences will feel the same way."

South African audiences will find out if he's right on 20 June when *Speed Racer* opens in South African movie theatres.

James O'EHley





MOVIE NEWS

Buck, Wilma and Twiki

NO, THESE AREN'T CHARACTERS from some locally produced Afrikaans television series. They were the characters in an innovative science-fiction series that ran from 1979 to 1981 (the series followed a pilot movie that was released in 1979). The storyline followed the exploits of Captain William Anthony "Buck" Rodgers, who in 1987 launched into the void in a space shuttle and due to a life-support malfunction was frozen for 504 years. In 2491, he was discovered, thawed out and had to try to fit into 24th-century culture, while battling evil forces. He was supported in his adventures by friend/love interest Colonel Wilma Deering (played by Erin Gray) and a small annoying robot called Twiki (voiced by Mel Blanc). It appears that not even Buck Rodgers is safe from the mighty Hollywood machine as it tries desperately to find

interesting material to make movies about. Director Frank Miller was mentioned, an estimated \$40 million budget was rumoured and the film will be released by Nu Image/Millennium Films. Back in the eighties, Buck Rodgers was epic, inventive and fun - but that was a long time ago. How this new interpretation will do is anybody's guess.



Star Wars: The Clone Wars

SO, ARE YOU READY for another theatrical *Star Wars* release? Is there any other answer to this question other than a firm but respectful, "Yes master"? *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* is a full-length (two hours), CGI-animated movie due for release later this year. Here's an official quote: "On the frontlines of an intergalactic struggle between good and evil, fans young and old will join such favourite characters as Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Padmé Amidala, along with brand-new heroes like Anakin's padawan learner, Ahsoka. Sinister villains - led by Palpatine, Count Dooku and General Grievous - are poised to rule the galaxy. Stakes are high, and the fate of the *Star Wars* universe rests in the hands of the daring Jedi Knights. Their exploits lead to

the action-packed battles and astonishing new revelations that fill *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*." This new *Star Wars* movie is being directed by Dave Filoni (*Avatar: The Last Airbender*) with a story by George Lucas. We can't wait!



Hancock reshoots

IF YOU LIKE SUPERHERO movies and want something different from the usual angst-ridden good guys that seem to get all the cool superpowers, then *Hancock* might be just the thing to brighten your day. Starring Will Smith, *Hancock* is the story of a superhero bum, a drunk that does more harm than good. The trailers look amazing and the more information that is released, the better it gets. Although the movie is due for release soon, Will Smith was recently spotted in New York reshooting segments of the movie due to ratings problems. According to Peter Berg (director), because the movie "remained surprisingly sexual, violent and true in spirit to an original script" it twice received an

R-rating from the MPAA. The reshoots are necessary to tone down some of the scenes so they can get a lower rating and therefore more faces into cinemas when the movie is released later this year.



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THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Director: Chris Weitz
Cast: Nicole Kidman | Eva Green | Daniel Craig | Dakota Blue Richards
Genre: Fantasy Adventure
Rating: 13 (V)
Run time: 109 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

THIS MOVIE MADE QUITE a number of headlines when it was released late last year. Not only was it was one of New Line Cinema's most expensive projects to date (it cost around \$180 million), but religious organisations criticised the movie because it's script was written by Philip Pullman, an atheist and author of *His Dark Materials*, a trilogy of books including *The Golden Compass*. Religious issues aside, *The Golden Compass* features an intriguing story line,

amazing special effects, and a first-class cast. The story takes place in a parallel universe that is almost identical to ours. In this parallel universe, a person's soul takes the shape of an animal and is called a daemon. Furthermore, the Magisterium is an authoritarian organisation with a hidden agenda it justifies as being 'for the greater good'. The story develops as a little orphan girl, Lyra Belacqua (Dakota Blue Richards), becomes the keeper of the Golden Compass and she realizes that her world and other parallel universes are in jeopardy if the Magisterium gets away with their plans. As she sets out with her Golden Compass (which has the ability to seek out the truth), she meets a series of characters along the way. Some are sincere, while others, such as Marisa Coulter (Nicole Kidman), know that Lyra holds the Golden Compass and would stop at nothing to steal it from her and use



it for the Magisterium's evil plans. *The Golden Compass* is one of the few epic movies that grab your attention from the get-go and keeps it until you, disappointingly, realize you will have to wait a year or so for the sequel.

Regardt Van Der Berg

GHOST IN THE SHELL: SOLID STATE SOCIETY (LIMITED EDITION)

Director: Kenji Kamiyama
Cast: Mary Elizabeth McGlynn | Bob Buchholz | Richard Epcar | Michael Forest | Rebecca Forstadt
Genre: Animation
Age Restriction: 13+
Run time: 109 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

"ANIME IS ALL SUBTEXT and emotion." - Mary Elizabeth McGlynn, English voice actor for Motoko. Taking place after *2nd Gig* (Season 2) of the popular *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* anime series, this feature-length movie doesn't require any prior knowledge of the series, but admittedly it wouldn't hurt. A futuristic cyberpunk set in Japan, the plot follows the show's usual MO: members of the government organisation, Section 9, investigate strange matters of public security, usually in some way related to issues of cybernetic abuse (such as hacking) or more serious. It's pretty



cerebral stuff with a slower pace than action-junkies might be willing to accept, but worth every second of it if you're into whodunit detective stories, albeit with a futuristic twist.

Aside from the feature-film disc, there is the movie soundtrack CD (with some truly stunning music composed by Yoko Kanno) and an Extras disc



that elaborates on the series, the film as well as the world in which the story takes place. It's fascinating stuff if you're into cyberpunk or anime. The *Limited Edition* comes in a stunning tin box that'd look great on any collector's shelf.

English and Japanese voice options are available.

Miktar "Bato" Dracon

ORIGIN: SPIRITS OF THE PAST (2-DISC SPECIAL EDITION)

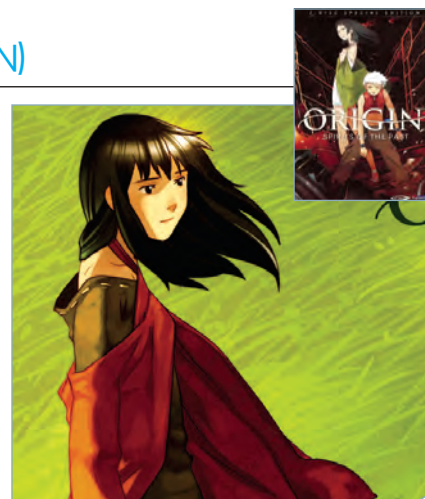
Director: Keiichi Sugiyama
Cast: Carrie Savage | Chris Patton | Robert McCollum | R. Bruce Elliot
Genre: Animation
Rating: 13+
Run time: 94 minutes
Score: ★★★ (+1 for awesome "green" box)

A LONG TIME AGO, MAN genetically tinkered with plants and then sent them to the Moon to try and create a liveable atmosphere on our little lunar orbital. But something went wrong: the plants turned into a giant (metaphorical?) dragon and attacked Earth, turning the Blue Marble into a Moss Marble. Thousands of years later, a boy finds a girl in a stasis pod and it just so happens that the girl has the final key needed to activate a giant volcano that will reset Earth back to how things were before the Attack of the Plant Dragons. But it will kill everyone not on board the Volcano Rapture Express. Or so the story goes.

As far as anime feature films go, *Origin* is by no means terrible. It's actually quite enjoyable to



watch, but is incredibly drawn out. Also, I wouldn't say that "the animation is among the best ever put to film," as IGN.com did on the DVD box. The visuals are cool, but they're nothing special if you've watched other anime movies in the last four years. Or perhaps I've simply seen too many anime movies



of this type. You tell me. Regardless, it has over an hour of fun extra features and a host of making-of documentaries if you want to know more about the gears and cogs behind the whole process.

English and Japanese voice tracks are included.

Miktar "Ghibli" Dracon

HITMAN (EXTREME EDITION)

Director: Xavier Gens
Cast: Timothy Olyphant | Olga Kurylenko
 Douggray Scott
Genre: Action
Age Rating: 18 (LN)
Run time: 90 minutes
Score: ★★☆☆



MOVIES BASED ON GAMES, these are all too often nothing to write home about. So it was with some trepidation that I sat down to watch *Hitman*. I set it up on one screen, with Web browser open on the other, in preparation for a bit of multitasking watching. With considerable, and delighted, surprise, I soon found myself paying more or less full attention to the movie! This is no cinematographic masterpiece, and yet it is not a title in desperate need of redeeming features. The basic premise (without excessive spoilers) is as follows: he was genetically engineered to be a super-assassin; he has no feelings; he has no name, just a number - 47. He carries out difficult hits on high-profile targets, generally dangerous men in positions of power. Something in an assignment goes wrong, and he is faced with a puzzle, and discovers that he has been set up. The action and intrigue have him dodging Interpol, the Russian militia (police force), the allies of his most recent target, and his own colleagues. Let me not mince words: much of what takes place

stretches the boundaries of credibility, and some of it is plain outrageously over the top. But overall, the film has a definite flair, as Agent 47 struggles with previously buried emotions, becoming almost human. The visual style and the musical accompaniment are well carried out, and at times have an almost poetic quality, which is unexpected in a movie based on a violent videogame. Then again, Uwe Boll had no hand in the production of this film, so that's already a positive start! The bonus features on the DVD include a gag reel, extensive interviews and behind-the-scenes footage, deleted scenes, and a rather entertaining documentary on the weapons used in the movie.

Alex Jelagin

I AM LEGEND

Director: John Carpenter
Cast: Will Smith | Alice Braga
Genre: Horror
Age Rating: 13 (V)
Run time: 101 minutes
Score: ★★★★★



WILL SMITH, AS AN actor, has come a very long way. From his roots in sitcoms, he has travelled the gamut of comedy, action comedy, action and drama, proving repeatedly that the one-time, fun-core rapper has what it takes to deliver a compelling and often surprising performance.

I Am Legend is a film that allows him to show off his abilities wonderfully. Robert Neville (Smith) believes that he is the last man on Earth after a virus wiped out most of the population, and turned the remainder into savage, zombie-like predators. Accompanied by his faithful dog, Sam, Neville is still seeking a cure for the disease, while avoiding attacks by the vicious creatures, which are his only neighbours in a deserted Manhattan.

I Am Legend is a stylish and moving drama interlaced with a few rather tense scenes. The cinematography and soundtrack (or lack thereof) do well to reinforce Smith's isolation in the film, and his portrayal of a man driven insane by loneliness is subtle and poignant. Sadly,

some of the CG effects (of which there are many) are poorly implemented, but their poor quality doesn't detract from the experience too much. It's still a great film, even if the CG animals in the beginning look a bit 'rotten'.

Best of all, though, is the alternate ending included on the DVD. It's not just a 'deleted scene', but rather a second copy of the film, with the alternate ending (which is far superior to the theatrical ending). This is an excellent film, thought provoking and thoroughly enjoyable.

Walt Pretorius

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THE HEARTBREAK KID

Director: Bobby Farrelly | Peter Farrelly
Cast: Ben Stiller | Malin Akerman | Michelle Monaghan | Jerry Stiller | Rob Corddry
Genre: Comedy
Rating: 16 (LSN)
Run time: 112 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

FINALLY, A HOLLYWOOD COMEDY that isn't a Hollywood comedy. *The Heartbreak Kid* isn't going to appeal to everyone, so approach it with caution because it's callous, nasty and therefore absolutely perfect if you're into that kind of thing. The Farrelly brothers (also responsible for *Dumb and Dumber* and *There's Something About Mary*) have directed a better than decent gag movie, and although the Ben Stiller in a

romantic comedy' routine might send most running for the hills, you'd really be better off giving it a try. Stiller plays a middle-aged, single man who meets the girl of his dreams. A short while later, he finds himself married and on honeymoon in Mexico. Overnight, his bride goes from hot honey to annoying pain in the crack and to spice things up even further, he meets another girl at the same resort. Predictable, comedic hilarity ensues. It's not the sort of 'silly falling down funny' that ruins many other movies, but rather a series of smart encounters with other well-written characters, close shaves and hard lessons. The acting is good enough and everyone stays true to their characters. Malin Akerman is exceptional and seems to have no fear of embarrassing herself on camera



– always a good thing in a movie such as this. There're a few decent extras on the DVD making this a worthwhile buy.

Michael James

3:10 TO YUMA

Director: James Mangold
Cast: Russel Crowe | Christian Bale | Ben Foster
Genre: Western
Age Restriction: 13 (LV)
Run time: 122 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

FINALLY, A NO-NONSENSE, ACADEMY-AWARD-NOMINATED Western with an excellent plot, superb performances (Crowe and Bale are good; Foster is in a league of his own in his portrayal as a badass), top-notch gunfights, intrigue, a-not-what-you'd-expect ending, heroes and villains – just the way they made Westerns in the good old days.

In fact, we agree with Bruce Westbrook from the *Houston Chronicle*: *3:10 to Yuma* is definitely the best Western since *Unforgiven* and *Tombstone*. It's just what the genre needed.

3:10 to Yuma tells the story of infamous outlaw Ben Wade's (Crowe) capture. Because he's such a high-risk prisoner and his gang's out there somewhere, sure to come to his rescue, a hotchpotch team is hastily



assembled to deliver him to Yuma where he'll be placed on a train that will take him to stand trial for murder, robbery and everything else he's done wrong. Civil War veteran Dan Evans (Bale) volunteers to deliver Wade alive to the '3:10 to Yuma' – something he'll later regret.

An arduous horseback journey ensues with Wade's



gang in hot pursuit. However, Wade's gang's not the biggest threat to Evans and his group. Wade's a canny operator and knows how to exploit human weakness. *3:10 to Yuma* is a five-star film and comes highly recommended.

Nati de Jager

THE NINES

Director: John August
Cast: Ryan Reynolds | Melissa McCarthy | Hope Davis | Elle Fanning
Genre: Drama
Rating: 16
Run time: 95 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

NOW HERE IS A strange one. It even has a tenuous but apt tie to gaming, as one of the characters is a videogame developer. *The Nines* poses a little problem, because discussing any aspect of the plot in any kind of detail will just end up spoiling the movie. So without revealing too much... It's a single movie made up of three different but interlinked 'parts'. All of the actors play similar but subtly different characters in each of the three parts, and everything is neatly tied together at the end. It has a twist that you won't see coming thanks to the director who crafted a compelling experience with just the right amount of everything to keep you guessing. The three main actors must be commended for bringing



a different kind of freshness to each of the three parts they play, and all manage to stay away from duplicating their roles. Hope Davis is particularly impressive by first playing a sultry homemaker, then an executive and then a hippy. Equally, Ryan Reynolds does a surprisingly good job in this one and manages to move away from flexing his muscles



and into something with a little more depth. It's a really good movie that is arguably a little slow paced, but certainly worth it in the end. Bizarrely, the DVD release has no extra features: it's bizarre because some insight into the movie would have really been interesting considering the subject matter.

Michael James



BALLS OF FURY

Director: Robert Ben Garant

Cast: Dan Fogler | Christopher Walken | George Lopez | Maggie Q | James Hong

Genre: Comedy

Age Rating: 13

Run time: 87 minutes

Score: ★★



ARE YOU SITTING DOWN? This is a kung-fu movie about the ping-pong underground. Although the premise sounds desperate, with the right director, actors and styling, it might have been a cult classic, a little like *Nacho Libre*, but as it's served, it'll only crack a few smiles. The only real highlight is the delectable Maggie Q (you might remember her from *Live Free or Die Hard* and *Mission: Impossible III*) who often wears only what's necessary to maintain the PG13 rating and does a good job of punching and kicking her way through the movie. Plenty of slapstick comedy, gay jokes and the like should keep the adolescents entertained... but only just. And Christopher Walken, dude, what are you doing in this thing. Although the movie has no kung fu, in all honesty, *Balls of Fury* is not storm-out-the-cinema terrible, but rather average in every possible way. There are a few decent gags and some good dialogue, but that's about all worth mentioning. Perhaps if Jack Black was the leading man and a different director had taken charge, things would have been very

different. The extras on the DVD also have no kung fu and feature an odd collection of deleted scenes, an alternative ending that changes nothing, the making of and a silly comedy bit about the girl who's responsible for all the ping-pong balls on the movie set.

Michael James

JOSHUA

Director: George Ratliff

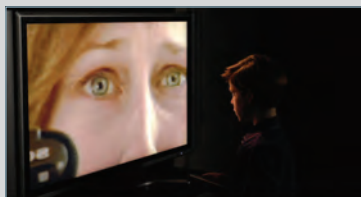
Cast: Sam Rockwell | Vera Farmiga | Jacob Kogan

Genre: Thriller

Age Rating: 16 (L)

Run time: 106 minutes

Score: ★★★★★



JOSHUA IS A DISTURBING look at what happens when a highly intelligent young boy with exceptional talents suddenly starts acting strangely, becoming a parent's worst nightmare.

Brad and Abby Cairn - an affluent young stockbroker and his wife - seem to have it all: a happy marriage, a spacious and luxurious Manhattan apartment, a highly gifted nine-year-old son and a baby sister on the way. Life couldn't be better and the couple's thrilled about the new addition to the family. However, Joshua is a worryingly intelligent child, to such a degree that he acts and thinks like an adult. Demonstrating immeasurable brilliance as a pianist, Joshua spends much time with his gay uncle, but distances himself from his parents. And when Abby brings Joshua's newborn baby sister home from the hospital, the young boy feels alienated.

Slowly but surely bizarre things start occurring at home. As the baby's whines drive Abby to the point of a nervous breakdown, Joshua's behaviour changes from eccentric to downright hostile. He

starts discarding all of his toys, killing pets and even disembowels a stuffed animal. To make things worse, his family members begin to suffer tragic fates.

As a suspense thriller, *Joshua* will keep you guessing throughout. And things aren't as they seem. With all the strange things happening, the viewer has to ask the question, "Is everything a series of eerie coincidences, or is Joshua behind it all?"

Nati de Jager

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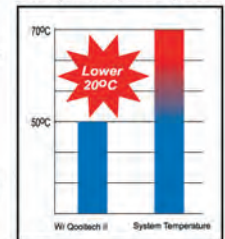


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RESIDENT EVIL: EXTINCTION

Director: Russell Mulcahy
Cast: Milla Jovovich | Oded Fehr | Ali Larter | Iain Glen | Ashanti | Mike Epps
Genre: Horror
Rating: 16 (V)
Run time: 90 minutes
Score: ★★☆☆

THE FILMS BASED ON the *Resident Evil* videogames are certainly among the better examples of game-to-movie adaptations. These three movies have followed an interesting progression: the first took place in the Umbrella Corporation's building, the second moved out into Raccoon City, and now this third chapter spans the globe. In stark contrast to the two previous titles, the action in this one takes place predominantly in broad daylight, in post-

apocalyptic desert conditions. The T-virus has swept the world, decimating its population, and scattered survivors must find somewhere safe to go. Alice, played by Jovovich, meets up with a caravan of armoured trucks and random vehicles rather reminiscent of the *Mad Max* films. However, she is tracked down by a stereotypical evil-genius scientist of the Umbrella Corporation, who is intent on using her genetic material to further his research (she is already a part of his experiment, actually.) This research produces faster, more dangerous zombies than the varieties seen to date. As game-to-movie adaptations go, this is actually a pretty good effort, and also features some pretty nifty camera work. The acting, predictably, is rather mediocre, and the story line is quite shallow – these are to be expected, however, as this is an escapist romp, rather than a thought-provoking cinematographic masterpiece. In



terms of bonus features, this product scores quite well, featuring a number of deleted scenes (most of these justifiably deleted!), as well as director's commentary and extensive behind-the-scenes footage and interviews. This title is also available on Blu-ray Disc.

Alex Jelagin

NOMAD (THE WARRIOR)

Directors: Sergei Bodrov and Ivan Passer
Cast: Kuno Becker | Jay Hernandez | Jason Scott Lee | Doskhan Zhaxynov | Ayanat Yesmagambetova | Mark Dacascos
Genre: Drama
Age Restriction: 13 (V)
Run time: 112 minutes
Score: ★★★★★

THE RUSSIAN FILM INDUSTRY seems to be taking off in a big way. This is not the first movie from "the Motherland" to have crossed our reviewing screens. The most surprising thing is the fact that, other than the subject matter, there is really no clue as to its country of origin: production quality is on a par with that of Western countries (although, at times, it seems that the lip-synching goes out slightly, unless it's a dubbing issue). The film is set in what is now Kazakhstan, in the 18th century, and the troubles that beset the Kazakhs, the tribe of horse-riding nomads



after whom the region is now named. Although I will no doubt be dragged over the coals for this, I nevertheless think of this movie as the result of a non-Hollywood production of a concept akin to *300*. It is a tale of personal courage and leadership. The acting is solid, and the cinematography is downright epic in its broad, sweeping portrayal of the Asian steppes. As you may have gathered, I deem the lack



of Hollywood glitz in this production a virtue – and yet you don't have to be a lover of foreign art films to appreciate this one. Furthermore, the historical aspects may be accurate and authentic, but the film isn't a history documentary. To summarise: highly recommended! Unfortunately, no extra features are included on the DVD.

Alex Jelagin

BATS: HUMAN HARVEST

Director: Jamie Dixon
Cast: David Chokachi | Michael Jace | Pollyanna McIntosh | Martin Papazian | Melissa De Sousa | Tomas Arana
Genre: Thriller
Rating: 13 (V)
Run time: 85 minutes
Score: ★★

HERE WE HAVE A modern example of a B-grade horror flick. A military rescue mission yields information about Chechen rebels putting together some Weapon of Mass Destruction (the capital letters are a result of the melodrama attached to this in the script). So a covert operation is mounted. The team consists of several Delta Force soldiers and a Russian born female CIA operative. They are airlifted into a territory that has mysteriously been abandoned for about a year. Locals tell of anyone going into the forest never being seen again. A three-way conflict of interests ensues, with the Russian army, the Chechen rebels, and the movie's protagonists making up the three



points of this triangle. Upon entering the forest, the team discovers badly mauled corpses. Soon thereafter, it comes to light that vicious blood- and flesh-consuming bats are responsible for these deaths (yes, you probably guessed this from the movie's title). Well, as it turns out, the bats are actually the product of an experiment and, in fact, constitute the 'weapon of mass destruction' that is being



developed. The story is pretty standard fare for this sort of movie, and includes conspiracy elements that, along with the leading actress's more than passing resemblance to Milla Jovovich, render this title quite reminiscent of the *Resident Evil* films. Nothing special here, and the extra features on the DVD consist of two deleted scenes.

Alex Jelagin

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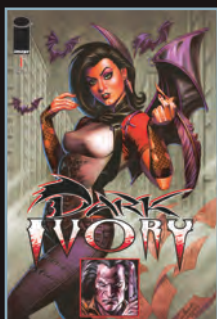
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Look & Listen
For the Fans

DARK IVORY #1 (OF 4)

Format: Comic Miniseries
Publisher: Image
Writer: Linsner / Hopkins
Artist: Linsner
Price: R28.50



JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSNER, CREATOR of the popular comic character Dawn, brings a new story to the comic-book world in the form of *Dark Ivory*. It's easy to spot the comic, with the very obvious Linsner artwork gracing the cover and interior. The story itself has a lot in common with what we've seen from Linsner in the past, so although it's a new character and there's a co-writer on the project, it's all very much what I'd expect from Joe Linsner. That being said, as a comic creator, he has a huge fan base and following, and many of them will want to pick up this issue "just because." It's also going to be appealing to any gothic, angst-driven kids out there, and if you're not familiar with Linsner's art, it is really stunning when you see it the first few times. In my opinion, *Dark Ivory* is a bit too 'emo', a bit too poser and a bit too similar to many other things out there. On the other hand, Linsner is one of the more successful comic creators out there. You will have to make up your own mind.

Clive Burmeister



DREAMWAR #1 (OF 6)

Format: Comic Miniseries
Publisher: DC / Wildstorm
Writer: Keith Giffen
Artist: Garbett / Scott
Price: R27.95



A STRING OF SEEMINGLY NATURAL disasters simultaneously erupts across the Wildstorm universe, and strange technological impossibilities are spotted. As the various super-teams react to the situations arising, they discover that there is something more to these incidents than meets the eye - something like a crossover! Well, to them it probably seems more like an invasion of some sort, but when we spot DC superheroes going toe to toe with Wildstorm ones, it's fairly obvious to us what is going on. The only thing that remains a mystery is the how and why. However, to figure that out you'll have to follow the rest of this miniseries, as no secrets are given away in the first issue. A good crossover is always fun to read, and it's great when the writers come up with a truly intriguing idea for the crossover story to take place.

Clive Burmeister



SUPERMAN: INFINITE CITY

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: DC Comics
Writer: Mike Kennedy
Artists: Carlos Meglia
Price: R145



THIS IS A NEW, original, complete-story-arc-in-a-book and quite a funky, oddball one at that (even for the Man of Steel Determinism). Metropolis is sustaining some serious damage from powerful weapons of indeterminate origin in the hands of idiots, so Clark and Lois travel to an abandoned old mid-western town following a lead. There they find the town of Infinite City and possibly the most-spectacular work Carlos Meglia has done since the original Argentine *Cybersix* comic-book series.

The art direction is the first thing you'll notice when flipping through this graphic novel: edgy, curly colourful angles with some really bizarre choices in proportion, but it all works. Best of all, the plot has more than a few good twists that provide some genuine thrills, making this one of the more interesting *Superman* comics in a while.

Miktak Draco



SEA OF RED VOL. 1: NO GRAVE BUT THE SEA

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Image
Writer: Rick Remender
Artist: Salgood Sam
Price: R\$4.95



WITH ALL THE MADNESS surrounding undead stories these days, and the endless pirate-related hype, it was only a matter of time until they came together in a comic. There are a few catches though. Instead of zombie pirates - since it's zombie everything these days, no genre or idea is safe from becoming 'zombified' - it's vampire pirates; and instead of ye old pirates on the open seas with parrots on their shoulders, the majority of the story takes place in the present day. Overall, *Sea of Red* is pretty entertaining, with a few original ideas in an otherwise very saturated theme. It is also nicely written and put together, with a very fast-paced and sketchy artistic style that bristles with the rolling action sequences. If undead comics are your thing, or you like a good pirate tale of revenge, then *Sea of Red* may be a good story for you to get wrapped up in.

Clive Burmeister



WOLVERINE: FIRST CLASS #1

Format: Comic Series
Publisher: Marvel
Writer: Fred Van Lente
Artist: Andrea Di Vito
Price: R\$28.50



WOLVERINE: *FIRST CLASS #1* is a plainly written story that looks at Kitty Pryde's first mission as an X-Man. Instructed by Professor Charles Xavier, she accompanies an objecting and bitter Wolverine to a small town somewhere in the middle of nowhere where a powerful mutant is staying. She undertakes this mission to be re-allowed to Xavier's school so that she can learn to control her power and live a more normal life. Although I found the comic to be rather immature in content, it does provide some background into the X-Men characters, and hints at a few of the moral lessons that X-Men stories usually try to cover. So, although I don't think any adult readers out there will get much out of the comic, unless they're diehard fans, it could be a great new series for younger readers to enjoy.

Clive Burmeister



TECH JACKET

Format: Graphic Novel
Publisher: Image
Writer: Robert Kirkman
Artists: E.J. Su
Price: R\$115



A TECH JACKET IS CONSIDERED the most powerful weapon in the universe, and due to a series of mishaps, one manages to get attached (and they cannot be removed) to a boy from Earth called Zack Thompson. Naturally, only the fate of the universe is at stake! It's quirky, good-natured fun with a real "I wish that was me" kick to it, which always makes for an engrossing read.

If you've read the exemplary comic series *The Walking Dead* or the mind-altering *Battle Pope*, then you've already been exposed to the oddly off-beat brilliance of Robert Kirkman. While working on the *SuperPatriot* miniseries, Kirman and co-creator E.J. Su started a new monthly series called *Tech Jacket*. While the pitch was accepted by Image, the series was cancelled after only six issues. This graphic novel is the complete six-issue collection along with a few tidbits that would have been in issues seven and eight.

Miktar Dragon



BOOGILY HEADS

RRP: Priced from R85 upwards

Boogily Heads are a distinct line of art toys created by artist Gus Fink. Each Boogily Head features bobble-head action (their heads are attached to a small spring in case you're wondering) and a collectible 'Mini Comix', written and illustrated by Gus Fink. The first series (of three) includes six, one-of-a-kind characters, each with their own name and story. You can put them anywhere, collect them and even sacrifice them to the god of your choice*. For more information, contact the DLA Group on (011) 704-4646.



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Apulia - Aro82a

CHEATS, TIPS AND EASTER EGGS

DISCLAIMER: All cheat codes come directly off the Internet. Direct all complaints there.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2 [360]

Cheat: GI John Doe Mode: Left Thumb-stick, Left Thumb-stick, A, Right Thumb-stick, Right Thumb-stick, B, Left Thumb-stick, Left Thumb-stick, X, Right Thumb-stick, Right Thumb-stick, Y
Cheat: Super Ragdoll: A, A, B, B, X, X, Y, Y, A, B, X, Y

Cheat: Third person mode: X, B, X, B, Left Thumb-stick, Left Thumb-stick, Y, A, Y, A, Right Thumb-stick, Right Thumb-stick

Cheat: TAR-21 Assault Rifle (during character customization): (Hold RB) Down, Down, Up, Up, X, B, X, B, Y, Up, Up, Y



NARUTO: ULTIMATE NINJA 3 [PS2]

Cheat: Unlock Everybody but Hanabi and 4th Hokage (at main menu): 1. Hold R1+R2 then press Square, Triangle, Square, Triangle; 2. Hold L1+L2 then press right, up, right, up; 3. Press L3+R3 at the same time. You will hear a sound to confirm code entry.

Tip: Unlimited Scrolls: Go to the room where Iruka-Sensei is (the house in front of Ichiraku Ramen) and talk to him. Select the 2nd option, then the 2nd option again. Go out and you will find scrolls on top of Ichiraku Ramen. Repeat if desired.

FINAL FANTASY VII [PSONE]

Cheat: Easy Chocobo Race (during racing mini-game): Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 to increase your Chocobo's speed. Hold R1 + R2 to recover your Chocobo's stamina.

FINAL FANTASY X [PS2]

Tip: Airship Passwords: There are also hidden locations accessible by using the "Input" feature found in the airship command list. You can find these passwords by deciphering Al Bhed messages left in specific locations around Spira. Note that all of the passwords are case-sensitive.

Cheat: Input the password MURASAME in all caps: Auron's MURASAME: bears the One MP Cost ability.

Cheat: Input the password GODHAND in all caps: Rikku's legendary Weapon GODHAND
Cheat: Input the password VICTORIOUS in all caps: Rikku's VICTORIOUS; armour that nullifies three types of elemental attack.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS [Wii]

Tip: Bottle Fishing Hole: Go to the fishing

hole, and find the sign that says: No Littering! You can get a bottle if you fish on the left side of the bridge that is near that sign. It's darker water than normal.

Tip: Frog Fishing Lure: To unlock the Frog Fishing Lure for the Fishing Hole, you must beat all eight levels of Roal Goal, a game found in the owner's establishment. To play it, simply look at it in first person using the C button. The game requires 5 rupees a play and you win 10 rupees for each round, and the frog lure for the eighth. (If you run short before you manage to get the lure, mowing the tall grass just outside (still in the fishing hole area) offers around 60 rupees).

DYNASTY WARRIORS 6 [PS3]

Tip: Unlock Voice Gallery: Raise up any character's experience to LV. 50. A Voice Gallery will be unlocked for that character in the Camp.

CONDEMNED 2: BLOODSHOT [360]

Tip: Unlock all Bonus Art: Create a Profile on your Xbox 360 and name it ShovelFighter. Start the Game logged in with it and all the bonus art will be available that normally requires you to unlock achievements.

2006 FIFA WORLD CUP GERMANY [PS2]

Tip: Unlocking All African Teams: Win the World Cup with African team
Tip: Unlocking All Americans Teams: Win the World Cup with American team
Tip: Unlocking All Asian Teams: Win the World Cup with Asian team
Tip: Unlocking All European Teams: Win the World Cup with European team



24: THE GAME [PS2]

Tip: Cheat Codes: At the main menu press R1, R2, L1, L2 at the same time and hold down until a screen that says SECURITY CLEARANCE appears. Then you can type in these codes below by pressing the X button over a letter and using the arrow buttons to change it to the letter needed. When done press the SQUARE button to enter the code.

Cheat: Invulnerable: BAUER066

Cheat: Infinite ammo: ALMEIDA062

Cheat: Unlock missions: DESSLER072

Cheat: Unlock bonuses: PALMER054

50 CENT: BULLETPROOF [PS2]

Tip: Cheat codes: During gameplay go to Options in the menu, then Cheats.

Cheat: Action 26 unlocked: orangejuice

Cheat: All Music Videos: HookMeUp50

Cheat: All songs unlocked: graballthat50

Cheat: Infinite Ammo: GrizzSpecial

Cheat: More powerful guns: the hub is broken

Cheat: Steadman Bryant: #1stunna

Cheat: Unlimited Health: ny'sfinestyo

Cheat: Unlock all weapons: gotthemrachets

Cheat: Unlock the blood hound counter kill: gunrunner

Cheat: Unlock the "My Buddy" video: sayhellotomylittlefriend

Cheat: "Empty n' Clips" Counter-Kill: workout

Cheat: "Guillotine" Counter-Kill: GettingDropped

Cheat: "G'd Up" Counter-Kill: GoodDieYoung

Cheat: "Mountain Climber" Counter-Kill: TimetoThrowDown

Cheat: "Southside" Counter-Kill: HardcoreG\$hit

Cheat: "Wanksta" Counter-Kill: AintGotNothin

ALIEN HOMINID [PS2]

Cheat: Unlock Everything: To unlock all mini-games, levels and hats, simply set the player 1 name to "ROYGBIV".

ROCK BAND [360]

Cheat: Unlock All Songs (disables saving): Red, Yellow, Blue, Red, Red, Blue, Blue, Red, Yellow, Blue



ALTER ECHO [PS2]

Tip: While playing the game, press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right and then enter in the following codes to unlock these cheats.

Cheat: Restore Life: Hold down L3 and press Right.

Cheat: Restore Time Dilation: Hold down L3 and Up.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME [PS2]

Tip: Start a new game. Stay on the balcony and hold L3 (left analog stick). Then, quickly input the following cheat:

Cheat: Unlock the original PoP: X, Square, Triangle, O, Triangle, X, Square, O

Tip: At the password screen of the bonus "Prince of Persia 1" game, enter the following codes to jump to the corresponding level.

Cheat: Level 2: KIEJSC

Cheat: Level 3: DMKERC

Cheat: Level 4: ACCVQC

Cheat: Level 5: XRTLQC

Cheat: Level 6: UHLCQC

Cheat: Level 7: RXCTPC

Cheat: Level 8: KBJOOC

Cheat: Level 9: DFPJNC

Cheat: Level 10: SWJJLC

Cheat: Level 11: LAQEKC

Cheat: Level 12: ZMBTOC

Tip: How to unlock the original Prince Of Persia: Around 33% of the way into the game, you will receive a new sword. Continue on until you break a wall and the Prince says, "It's said they built this palace on the ruins of

another..." Once you cross the next room, you will find a rotatable switch. Directly behind this switch is a breakable wall, although it doesn't appear to be one. If you hit it three times, you will find another room and you will receive a message informing you that Prince of Persia is now unlocked. You can also rotate that switch until it points to the new room and it will open a gate that allows you to play Prince of Persia right there without having to exit back to the Extra Features screen.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES [PS2]

Tip: Cheats are entered on the Pause Screen.

Cheat: Secondary weapon becomes a chainsaw: Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Circle, Square, Circle, Square

Cheat: Unlock Baby Toy Hammer: Left, Left, Right, Right, Circle Square, Square, Circle, Up, Down

Cheat: Unlock Telephone of Sorrow: Right, Left, Right, Left, Down, Down, Up, Up, Circle, Square, Circle, Circle, Square, Square

Cheat: Unlocks Swordfish Weapon: Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Circle, Square, Circle and Square

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE WARRIOR WITHIN [PS2]

Easter Egg: Alternate Ending: Finish the game with all nine life upgrades and obtain the Water Sword.

Tip: Water Sword: Collect all 9 life upgrades and go to the hourglass room. **NAG**



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